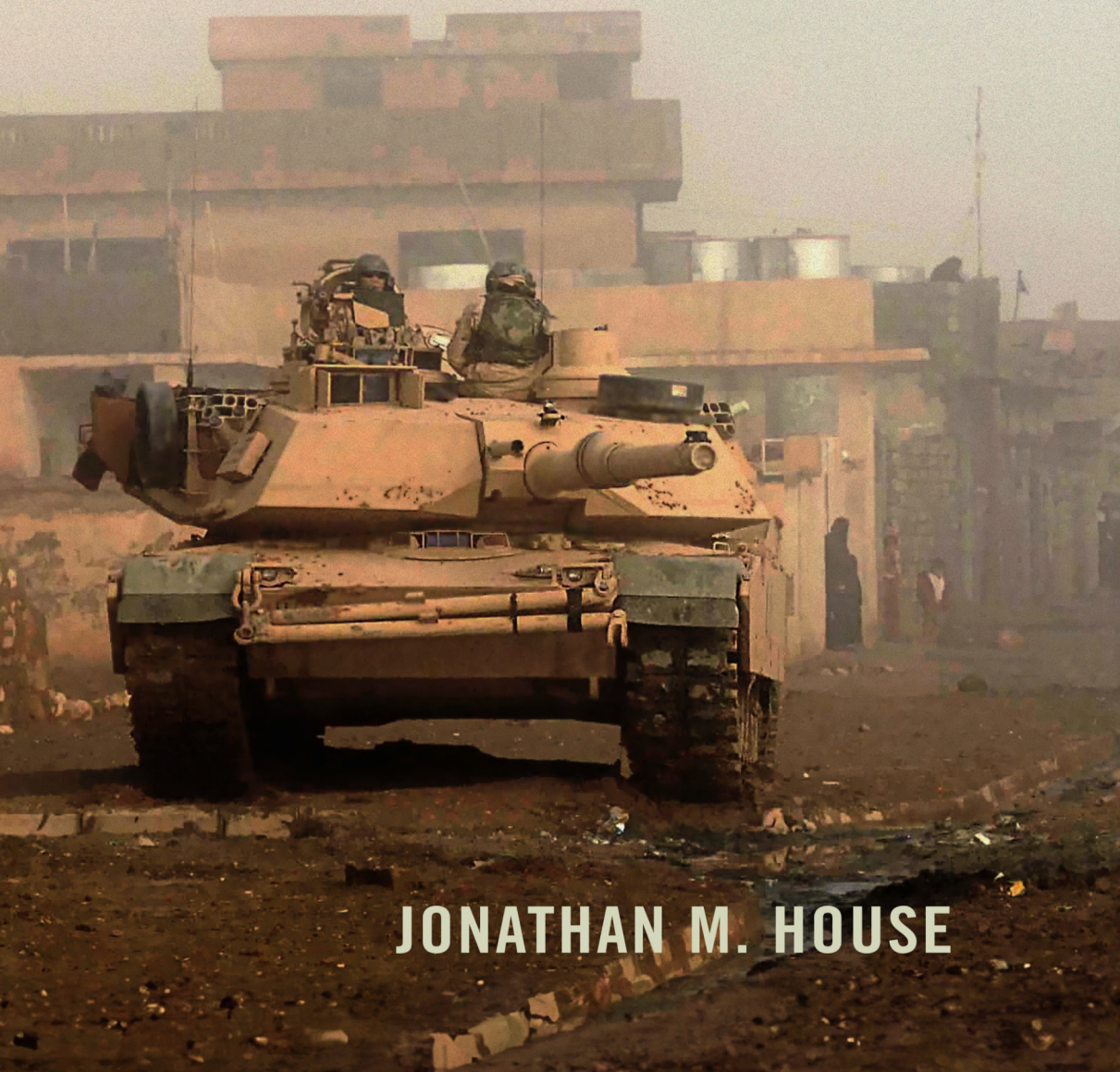
A MILITARY HISTORY OF THE NEW WORLD DISORDER

1989–2022



JONATHAN M. HOUSE

A Military History of the New World Disorder, 1989–2022

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Jonathan M. House

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To my wife, Nancy S. House, Captain, Chemical Corps (Ret.),
and our children, Marcy and Sarah,
all of whom tolerated and supported my absences,
both physical and mental, during this era

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Preface

Even the new world order cannot guarantee an era of perpetual peace.

George H. W. Bush, March 6, 1991

This study attempts to extend my military history survey of the post-1945 era beyond the demise of the Soviet Union and the Cold War to the point where America once again hesitated to use military force while Russia felt emboldened to reckless aggression. Like the two previous volumes (*A Military History of the Cold War, 1944–1962*, and *A Military History of the Cold War, 1962–1991*), my purpose is to explore military strategy and operational developments—the process by which politicians and military officers of the major powers designed, organized, and resourced military organizations and then deployed those organizations to deter or conduct conflicts.

Once I began this present study, however, I had to remind myself that the end of the Cold War also meant the end of a coherent American grand strategy. During the Cold War, different administrations had reinterpreted and sometimes made errors in the execution of that grand strategy. Overall, however, there had been a bipartisan agreement in the United States on the objectives of Containment. As Michael Mandelbaum observed, "U.S. presidents did not necessarily know when to use force, but they always knew why"—to thwart the perceived efforts of the Soviet Union, its allies, and proxies.[1] More generally, American vital interests included worldwide democracy, collective security through international alliances, and free trade to benefit the American economy. A lesser included role was to avoid or limit violence, aggression, nuclear proliferation, and humanitarian suffering. The United Kingdom, the French

Republic, and the Federal Republic of Germany all had their own national interests—such as the stability of former British and French colonies and the reunification of Germany—but their goals in international affairs were generally parallel to those of the United States.

In the United States, at least, that consensus on grand strategy no longer exists. In succession, the presidential administrations of William Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joseph Biden each came into office with foreign policy goals and attitudes about the use of force that explicitly rejected those of their immediate predecessors. Instead of occasional errors in implementing a consistent grand strategy, we have witnessed an oscillation of short-term goals and methods that, however well-intentioned, repeatedly put service members as well as local populations and American national security at risk without a larger strategic vision—and incidentally committed the United States and its allies to prolonged, indecisive limited wars. The human and budgetary cost of the open-ended military commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq has once again made the United States government overly cautious, fearing to risk further conflicts even when genuine threats are detected, if only because many Americans are leery of such commitments. That caution in turn emboldened potential aggressors.

To some extent, this uncertainty about enduring purposes was inevitable and even appropriate. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany, not to mention the declining influence of Marxist Socialism elsewhere and the growing power of China, necessitated a reevaluation of strategies in almost every capital city; if anything, policy makers were too slow to question their perceptions of reality and realpolitik. The immediate assumption that a unipolar world would now be heavily influenced and controlled by the United States and by worldwide democracy was simplistic if not misleading. Instead, diffuse impulses of Muslim fundamentalism and ethnic strife now burst forth to pose different problems for international security.

Journalist Bill Berkeley has argued persuasively that, contrary to stereotype, it was *not* inevitable that ethnic, tribal, religious, or racial hatreds would lead to enduring violence. Instead, he suggests, different governments and would-be dictators found it convenient to exaggerate and manipulate these prejudices for their own purposes. Often the real issue might be only which group controlled scarce resources.[2] During the Cold War, both sides had played favorites, aiding and arming tribal/clan/ethnic/sectarian groups as proxy fighters against other elements. As a matter of practical politics, for example, the governments of the United States, France, and South Africa, to name but a few, felt compelled to support local or regional autocrats against opponents who appeared to be proxies for Moscow, Beijing, Havana, Tehran, or Tripoli. Much of this

external assistance to local factions ended with the Cold War, but in the ensuing vacuum, men such as Radovan Karadžić and Charles Taylor appealed to social prejudices and suspicions to seize power while denying responsibility for the ensuing bloodshed and atrocities.

In the absence of a grand strategic consensus about the new era, Western governments often found themselves deploying forces in a vain effort to halt ethnic bloodshed and humanitarian suffering rather than to support their own vital interests. Although the moral intent was admirable, such deployments quickly lost public support when they resulted in open-ended commitments, expenditures, and casualties. Especially during the Clinton administration, "concerns about the fickleness of public support for American military operations abroad" resulted in a concerted effort to complete those operations quickly and with minimum casualties, often producing ineffectual or superficial results.[3] Under subsequent presidents, this same rush to finish and withdraw before losing public support was a fundamental factor contributing to Western defeat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A full critique of the absence of strategic consensus lies beyond the scope of this current study,[4] although the individual policy changes must, of necessity, appear in passing to explain the course of events. Nonetheless, such shifting goals led to ill-considered decisions that ignored intelligence estimates and produced unnecessary casualties among foreign civilian populaces, not to mention Americans and allies in uniform. Foreign adversaries and domestic politicians alike misinterpreted an American intolerance for *stalemate* as an inability to suffer *casualties* under any circumstances, a misperception that hampered the conduct of any coherent security strategy and may have misled opponents such as Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein about the strength of American resolve. Moreover, the lack of consistency in American policy over the past three decades inevitably increased friction and disagreement with its principal allies, further exacerbating the inefficiencies of the situation.

The difficulties that the West experienced while trying to maintain order, protect the innocent, and defeat Islamist extremism means that, inevitably, this survey is sometimes disjointed and lacking in clear themes and conclusions. This lack of clarity and consistency is, perhaps, one of the major conclusions about the post-1991 era.

The superiority of Western military units in conventional force-on-force warfare, honed during the Cold War and decisively demonstrated in 1989 and 1991, encouraged potential adversaries to turn to asymmetrical methods of insurgency. These methods took multiple forms simultaneously, ranging from violent labor strikes and demonstrations through assassination/decapitation (of leaders or intelligence officers), sabotage, and guerrilla tactics to pure terrorism.

Often the asymmetrical forces would probe their Western opponents, seeking first to locate the threshold that would provoke response. Once that level was identified, the nonstate actor strove to stay below that threshold, whittling his opponents down piecemeal while circumventing the Western forces as the Serbs attempted to do to the UN Protection Force in Bosnia. Alternatively, the aggressor might deliberately provoke an overreaction by the American or other Western forces so as to outrage public opinion both locally and in the countries from whence the troops came.[5] (More recently, as described in chapter 12, Vladimir Putin's Russia has also attempted to conduct "Gray Area" aggression below the threshold of Western response, succeeding on two occasions in Ukraine.)

Such techniques permitted the nonstate actors to work directly against Western public support for foreign interventions, appealing especially to the American impatience with anything less than clear-cut victory. This approach clearly targeted the Clausewitzian concept of passion (or public support) to negate Western policy or military capability. With the exception of Afghanistan immediately after the 9/11 attack, Western interventions in the post-1991 era rarely involved the genuine vital interests of the nation-states involved, meaning that the Western states would usually lose patience before their local opponents did. Moreover, the growing partisanship between the two American political parties impeded and sometimes imperiled the previous tradition of party cooperation on foreign policy. Under these circumstances, the endurance and short-term successes of Western military adventures appear more surprising than their ultimate failure.

Much of this period is so recent that historians have not yet had the opportunity to explore it fully, which again limited my ability to generalize and interpret. It will require several additional decades to obtain access to classified records, and in fact the development of word processing and electronic communications means that some traditional forms of archival records simply do not exist for the current era. Working for the US Army's Chief of Military History, officers in a dozen theaters attempted to copy and preserve the electronic records of operations, but they were not always successful if only because of the frequent turnover in headquarters personnel. In the case of nongovernmental actors such as terrorist groups, we may never have a full understanding of their intentions and internal dynamics. Consequently, this volume depends heavily on unclassified after-action reports and thoughtful journalism, both of which have unavoidable biases and limitations. Perhaps most obviously, this third volume of my survey focuses more on the United States, which began the period as the sole remaining superpower, than did the previous two studies. While resisting the temptation to examine all events from an American perspective,

I have had to acknowledge that American involvement or noninvolvement often proved crucial to world events. Nor can any one study portray the myriad of different experiences of soldiers and civilians in an era of endemic conflict.

Writing current or recent history is a Sisyphean task in which new interpretations and materials appear more rapidly than one person can digest them all, and where the author has only limited opportunity to reflect upon and evaluate the accuracy of such new versions of events. I apologize in advance if a particular memoir was overlooked or if participants believe that I have misrepresented or omitted their contributions.

As always, the views expressed in this study are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the United States, the Department of Defense, or any US governmental agency. My colleagues Joseph Fischer, Les Grau, and most especially John Kuehn ably reviewed portions of this manuscript. That said, any assertions or errors are solely my responsibility.

Leavenworth, Kansas
April 2024

Abbreviations

AFDL	Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo (Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Liberation du Congo-Zaire)
AFRC	[Sierra Leone] Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
ANA	Afghan National Army [post-2001]
AQAP	Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ASF	Afghan Security Forces [post-2001]
BCT	brigade combat team, a redundancy developed to describe a US brigade with its attached "slice" of previously divisional elements
BDA	bomb damage assessment
CENTCOM	[US] Central Command
CINC	commander in chief, especially the senior officer of a US unified or specified command (e.g., CINCCENT for CENTCOM); renamed "Combatant Commander" by Donald Rumsfeld
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States, the loose successor to the USSR
CJCS	chairman, [US] Joint Chiefs of Staff
CJFLC	Combined Joint Forces Land Component
CMOC	Civil-Military Operations Center
COP	combat outpost
DIA	[US] Defense Intelligence Agency
DOD	[US] Department of Defense
EC, EU	European Community, European Union

ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
EFP	explosively formed penetrator, an antiarmor variant of improvised explosive devices
FAR	[Pro-Hutu] Armed Forces of Rwanda (Forces Armées Rwandais)
FSB	Russian Federal Security Service (Federal'naya sluzhba bezopasnosti)
GRU	[Russian/Soviet] Main [Military] Intelligence Directorate (Glavnoye razvedyvatel'noye upravleniye)
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAF	Iraqi Air Force; Israeli Air Force
ICBM	intercontinental ballistic missile
IDF	Israel Defense Forces
IED	improvised explosive device
IFOR	[Bosnian] Implementation Force [NATO/UN]
IRGC	[Iran] Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISAF	[NATO] International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces [post-2003]
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (the Levant), aka Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or (pejoratively) Daesh (an Arabic transliteration of ISIL that implies oppression or trampling)
JAM	Jaysh al Mahdi, a Sadrist militia in Iraq
JAN	Jabhat al Nusra (the Support Front)
JCS	[US] Joint Chiefs of Staff
JDAM	Joint Direct Attack Munition, a conversion kit for precise guidance of a bomb
JNA	Yugoslav National Army (Jugoslovenska narodna armija)
JSOTF	Joint Special Operations Task Force
KFOR	Kosovo Force [NATO/UN]
KLA	Kosovar Liberation Army
LDK	Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës)
MNC-I	Multi-National Corps–Iraq, the tactical control element for the occupation
MNF-I	Multi-National Force–Iraq, the senior coalition headquarters during the occupation
MONUC	UN Observer Mission in the Congo (Mission des Observateurs des Nations Unies au Congo)

MONUSCO	UN Organisation Mission for the Stabilization of the Congo (Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo)
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Mouvimento Popular de Libertação de Angola)
MSND	[Slovenian] Maneuvering Structure of National Defense
MVD	Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs (Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del)
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NIF	[Sudan] National Islamic Front
OMON	Russian Special Purpose Militia Units (Otriad Militii Osobogo Naznacehniia)
OPCW	Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe
PDF	Panamanian Defense Forces
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCD	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (pro-Rwanda, anti-Kabila)
RCT	regimental combat team, a USMC regiment with attached divisional elements such as artillery
RGC	[Iraqi] Republican Guard Corps
RPF	Rwandese Patriotic Front
RPG	rocket-propelled grenade
RSK	Republic of Serbian Krajina
R2P	responsibility to protect (civilian populations at risk)
RUF	[Sierra Leone] Revolutionary United Front
SACEUR	[NATO] Supreme Allied Commander, Europe
SAMS	[US Army] School of Advanced Military Studies (aka "Jedi Knight School")
SDS	[Bosnian] Serb Democratic Party (Srpska Demokratska Stranka)
SFOR	[Bosnian] Stabilization Force, successor to IFOR
SOF	special operations forces
Spetsnaz	[Russian] special-purpose military units (Voyská spetsiálnovo naznachéniya)
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
TPFDL	Time-Phased Force and Deployment List
TRADOC	US Army Training and Doctrine Command
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UNAMID	United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur

UNAMIR	United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola)
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protective Force (former Yugoslavia)
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission (Iraq)
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USA	United States Army
USAF	United States Air Force
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy
VDV	Russian airborne and air assault forces (Vozdushno-Desantnye Voiska)

CHAPTER 1

Prelude in Panama

Panama, December 19–20, 1989

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviet Union had developed sophisticated air defense missiles and radars that proved effective against American aircraft over North Vietnam and Israeli fighters in the 1973 Yom Kippur conflict. In response, the US Air Force devoted considerable research to making its aircraft more difficult to detect, especially by reducing their radar visibility. The resulting concepts, officially labeled low-observable technology, are colloquially known as "stealth."

The Lockheed Advanced Development Projects Division ("Skunkworks") in Burbank, California, used these concepts to develop what became the F-117A Nighthawk. First flown in 1981, the F-117A was intended to penetrate Soviet-designed air defense systems and use newly developed precision-guided bombs against key targets. Although rumors of such a plane circulated frequently, the USAF went to considerable lengths to conceal the true nature of its design even after it was officially acknowledged in 1988.

On the evening of December 19, 1989, eight F-117As took off from Tonopah, Nevada, en route to Panama. Two of the eight were backup aircraft that returned to home base after the first of five air-to-air refuelings for the others. Four of the F-117As reportedly were earmarked to strike several locations known to be frequented by Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega, but his exact whereabouts that night were unknown; to preclude high civilian casualties, these four aircraft were scratched at the last moment. The other two planes, flying what became the Nighthawk's first combat mission, were headed for Rio Hato, an airfield and garrison on the Pacific coast of Panama.[1]

The US tactical commander for Panama, Gen. Carl Stiner, had requested that the F-117As bomb Rio Hato because that site contained two companies of Panamanian infantry known to be loyal to Noriega. However, the same

concern for excessive Panamanian casualties meant that the bombs were not dropped directly on the troop barracks. Instead, the aiming point was offset, expending 2,000-pound bombs in an empty field to overawe rather than kill the opposition. After the fact, this offset gave rise to unfounded criticism that the legendary new aircraft had missed its target.[2]

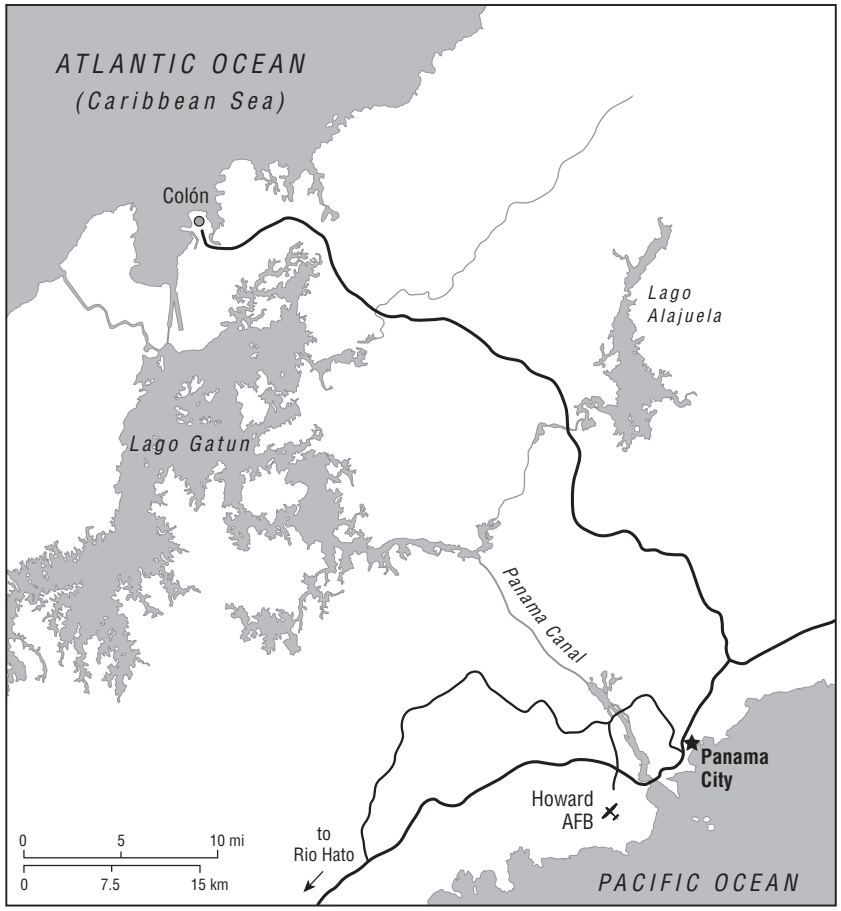
Until its retirement in 2008, the F-117A was one of many systems built for use against the Soviets that remaining in service under the very different circumstances of the post–Cold War era. Not only weapons, but doctrine and leaders had to make major adjustments for the new world after the demise of the USSR.

The Noriega Conundrum

On September 7, 1977, President Jimmy Carter and Panama's head of government Omar Torrijos signed a pair of treaties to resolve the long-standing issue of the Panama Canal. Not only did these agreements transfer the canal to Panama by the end of 1999, but they immediately ceded US control over large portions of the former Canal Zone to Panama. The result was that American military installations guarding the canal became scattered enclaves inside Panamanian territory, with Panamanian military forces sharing some of these installations with the Americans. Both civilian travel and US troop movements between the various enclaves were subject to Panamanian law, with the two sides often disagreeing on petty details such as advance notice of movement, license plates on vehicles, or rent for specific buildings.

Such issues were complicated by the undemocratic nature of Panamanian government. "Maximum Leader of the Revolution" Torrijos had seized power in 1968 from the elected civilian president and, with the help of his protégé Manuel Antonio Noriega Moreno, survived an attempted coup a year later. In response to American criticism, General Torrijos promised a gradual restoration of democracy, but nothing happened. Having satisfied national aspirations by obtaining the canal treaties, he died in a plane crash on July 31, 1981. Thereafter, a group of senior Panamanian colonels negotiated a complicated agreement for power sharing. Within two years, however, Manuel Noriega abrogated that agreement and became the new strongman. In October 1983, he got the legislature to pass Law 20, which gave the armed forces, redesignated as the Panama Defense Forces (PDF), de facto autonomy from the elected government and allowed the PDF to shut down media outlets and detain civilians for (alleged) reasons of national security.[3]

Unlike his mentor Torrijos, who had nationalist aspirations, Noriega was motivated purely by personal gain. As early as 1965, he accepted payments from the US Army to report on his fellow cadets in a Peruvian military academy;



Panama Canal Area. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

except under the Carter administration, the CIA paid him a stipend that reached $185,000 per year by 1981.[4]

In the context of the late Cold War, Noriega was useful to the American government and especially to the Reagan administration. Under Operation Black Eagle, Panama hosted facilities and front companies to ferry supplies to the Contras fighting against the pro-Marxist Sandinista government of Nicaragua. Panama also provided sites for signals intercept operations against the Sandinistas. In return, some US officials turned a blind eye when, beginning in 1982, Noriega increased cooperation with the Medellin drug cartel in Colombia. He used the Black Eagle transportation mechanisms, as well as the Panamanian embassy and consulates, to smuggle cocaine into the United States.

Simultaneously, Noriega pretended to cooperate with American drug enforcement efforts, apparently fingering his competitors to give US law enforcement the illusion of success. Panamanian government corruption grew steadily.[5]

Because of the multiple interests of the United States in the region, the Reagan administration rarely spoke with a united voice in regard to Panama. In 1984, for example, Secretary of State George Shultz approved of Noriega's handpicked candidate for president, Nicolas Barletta, because Barletta had attended the graduate school at which Shultz had taught. The next year, National Security Advisor John Poindexter personally warned Noriega to end his drug dealing and close relationships with Cuba, but Director of Central Intelligence William Casey reassured the dictator because the administration still wanted Noriega's help against the Sandinistas.[6]

As the decade wore on, America's need for this type of assistance declined while Noriega turned increasingly to Cuba and the Communist bloc for weapons and military advisers that the United States was reluctant to provide. The Reagan and especially Bush administrations tried diplomacy, economic sanctions, and military gestures to pressure Noriega into exile, while still hoping that Panamanians would deal with the matter themselves. In response, the dictator become increasingly violent in his repression of his opposition, including the use of paramilitary "Dignity Battalions" and "Doberman" riot police to beat and murder political opponents. Several attempted military coups failed to overthrow Noriega, leading instead to purges of suspect military personnel. To shore up his declining public support, the strongman appealed to Panamanian nationalism by systematic harassment of American service members and dependents traveling between installations.

US forces and commanders found themselves in a twilight zone where force options were severely constrained, both by treaty and by the intermingling of American troops, the PDF, and civilians of both nationalities. Any use of force was likely to produce extensive civilian casualties as well as an anti-American backlash throughout Latin America. In an era where the US military stressed high-intensity maneuver warfare against the Soviet Union, the Panamanian situation did not fit any known doctrine.[7]

Caught in the middle between the US and Panamanian governments was the commander in chief, Southern Command (CINCSO). CINCSO was the Department of Defense's commander for Latin America, one of ten unified or specified CINCs worldwide. From June 1987 through September 1989, the CINCSO was Gen. Frederick F. Woerner Jr. Woerner was extremely knowledgeable about the region, having studied the language and history as well as serving multiple assignments not only in Panama but in other parts of Latin America. Both Woerner and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1985

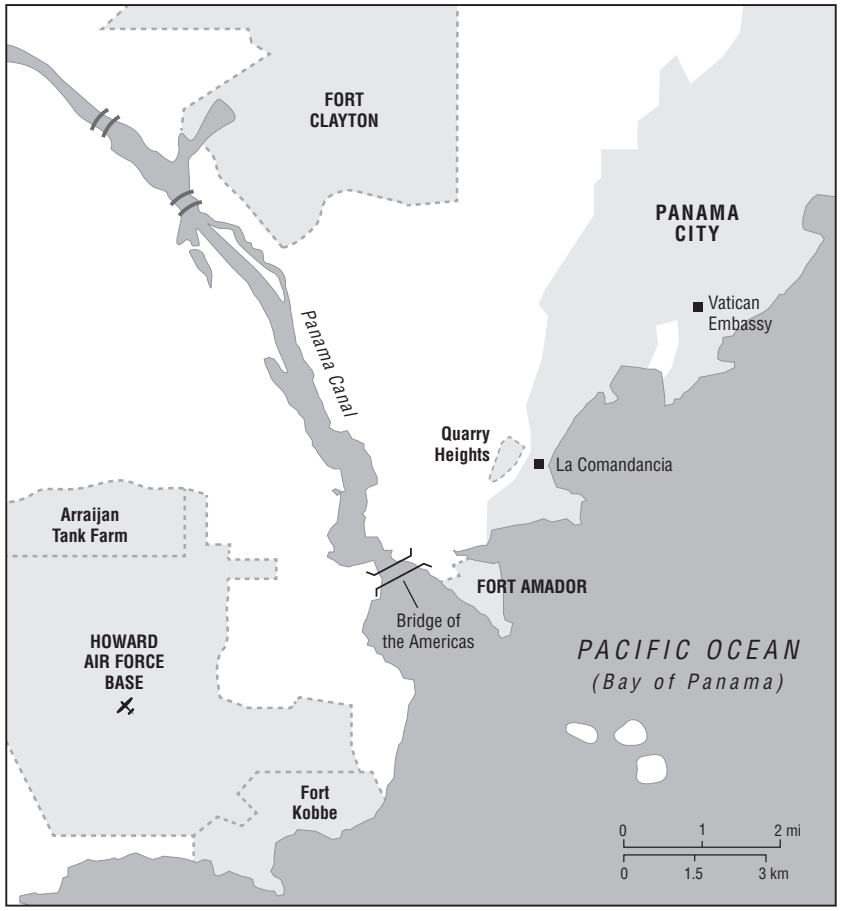
to 1989, Adm. William J. Crowe, frequently cautioned the Reagan and G. H. W. Bush administrations about the difficulties of using force in this volatile situation. This cautionary role would be a frequent experience for senior military leaders in subsequent decades.

General Woerner eventually bore the brunt of the Bush administration's growing frustration about Panama. Having been asked to extend in his position until 1991, in the summer of 1989 he was told to retire on sixty days' notice. Defense Secretary Richard Cheney declined to give any explanation, conceding that Woerner had faithfully executed administration policy. Privately, the secretary thought that the general identified too much with Latin American concerns.[8]

Woerner's difficulties were compounded by the fact that Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) was not staffed for active military operations. In comparison to most of the other unified and specified commands, SOUTHCOM had only skeletal staffs and logistical support units, two shortcomings that complicated any military response to the situation. Although elements of all four armed forces were intermingled in the former Canal Zone, the staffs were predominantly manned by army personnel. Of necessity, Woerner designated his largest subordinate headquarters, US Army South (USARSO), as Joint Task Force (JTF)–Panama to control many of the tactical units that would implement any military response, but even USARSO had few staff officers, most of them from the army and with limited knowledge of the other services.

Previous crises during the 1980s, notably the 1983 intervention in Grenada, had shown significant incompatibilities between the several armed forces in terms of communications, procedures, and doctrine. The 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act sought to improve "jointness" by requiring that officers receive education and experience in joint environments, but implementation of that act had barely begun when the Panama crisis developed. Despite good-faith efforts to work together between the different services, there were frequent disconnects and disagreements. Yet, coordination was essential because their units were jumbled together with overlapping security responsibilities on the small installations along the canal. Two of these joint issues were particularly significant.

First, the few US Marines assigned to Marine Forces (MARFOR) SOUTHCOM objected strongly to the restrictive rules of engagement (ROE) dictated by the Department of Defense. In essence, these ROE required that US forces identify hostile acts and intent by the PDF *before* they could use deadly force to defend themselves. Many marines attributed their losses in the 1983 Beirut suicide bombing to similar ROE, arguing that these restrictions ceded the initiative to any opponent, letting him in effect throw the first punch.



Canal Area Pacific Side. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

Restrictive ROE would be a recurring issue during the 1990s, but for MARFOR SOUTHCOM this disagreement came to a boil in April 1988, when a US Marine company (–) patrolled the Arraijan Tank Farm, a large, open area surrounded by jungle and containing fuel storage tanks. PDF forces repeatedly probed the area's security, sometimes provoking firefights with the defenders. However, the first such incident, on the night of April 12–13, resulted in the death of a marine, an apparent victim of friendly fire. This event contributed to a perception among USARSO officials, perhaps unjustified, that the marines were "trigger-happy." Panamanian spokesmen naturally depicted such incidents as examples of American recklessness and incompetence, denying Panama's involvement. Moreover, the senior US Navy officer in the command

objected to marines taking orders from what he regarded as an army headquarters, USARSO. The passage of time smoothed such issues, but each time new units of any service deployed to Panama, they were disconcerted and irked by the restrictions and by the seemingly laidback, business-as-usual attitude of the command.[9]

A different jointness question arose with regard to special operations forces (SOF). Interservice issues with such forces had surfaced during Operation Eagle Claw, the 1980 attempted rescue of hostages in Iran. Such issues led eventually to the formation of a joint specified headquarters, US Special Operations Command, in 1987. Even before this, the SOF elements within the various armed forces believed that they could operate most effectively as independent entities that did not risk their own security by close coordination with conventional headquarters. Among these independent-minded warriors was Col. Charles H. Fry, the commander of SOF for SOUTHCOM. Yet many senior officers, including the USARSO commander, Maj. Gen. Bernard Loeffke, who had significant special operations experience, considered such an independent role for SOF to be a dangerous violation of unity of command that increased the risk of friendly fire incidents.

In 1988, Colonel Fry established Task Force Gray from troops of the 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group, to conduct patrols and man observation posts in the jungle around installations such as Howard Air Force Base. TF Gray refused to provide information or otherwise coordinate its actions with the conventional troops responsible for security of the same area. On the evening of April 20, 1988, one of the observation posts discharged claymore mines and automatic weapons against a suspected intruder force. There was only limited evidence that this force was present, let alone had sustained casualties from the American fires. In the dark, without prior coordination, the airborne infantry battalion responsible for this area had difficulty linking up with the TF Gray outpost. Thereafter, SOF provided a liaison officer and some limited coordination with conventional headquarters, but the unity of command issue remained undecided.[10]

The Buildup

By 1987, Noriega's domestic support was crumbling, and he continued to use intimidation and force to maintain power. On February 4, 1988, two US grand juries indicted him by name for drug trafficking. The president of Panama, Eric Arturo Delvalle, tried to dismiss Noriega from the military, only to be forced into exile as the Noriega-dominated legislature installed a successor. Thereafter, the United States refused to recognize the puppet government installed in Panama City and placed in escrow canal revenue that should have gone to

that government.[11] Such a gambit was a routine gesture in most cases, but here it increased friction and hampered SOUTHCOM efforts to communicate with its PDF counterparts.

Some administration officials, notably Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams, advocated deploying large troop formations to reinstate the Delvalle government. This action, which seemed so easy at the strategic level, would probably have produced significant civilian casualties as well as an anti-American backlash throughout Latin America. The compromise in April 1988 involved sending first a military police (MP) battalion and then, a few weeks later, a second such battalion plus the 16th MP Brigade headquarters, a composite aviation company from the 7th Infantry Division (Light), and various small security and reconnaissance units. Plans had envisioned activating JTF-Panama when the United States began deploying units in anticipation of combat operations, but under the changing circumstances Woerner chose to activate the JTF to control the additional forces. This action made sense as a military precaution but increased the type of interservice friction mentioned above. Moreover, CINCSO thought that these deployments might become a self-fulfilling prophecy that actually increased the chances of confrontation.[12]

Sporadic violence and confrontations occurred over the next year. During the same time period, staffs in SOUTHCOM and elsewhere produced a revised set of contingency plans, collectively called Prayer Book. The most important of these plans were Blue Spoon, the deployment and combat operations portion, and Blind Logic, concerned with civil-military operations once the Noriega regime was eliminated. Although General Loeffke believed that his JTF-Panama could handle Blue Spoon operations, XVIII Airborne Corps as the traditional headquarters for such contingency operations became increasingly involved in planning until it displaced JTF-Panama as the primary warfighting headquarters in the event of military operations. Admiral Crowe and his J-3, Lt. Gen. Thomas Kelly, apparently made this decision in the fall of 1988; after extensive planning the corps headquarters assumed the responsibility formally in February 1989. In the event of executing the Prayer Book plans, the corps headquarters would be designated JTF-South because it would control forces of the various armed services.[13]

The preparations shifted from planning to troop deployment in May 1989. In national elections on May 7, opposition presidential candidate Guillermo Endara outpolled the regime candidate by more than two to one. When Noriega's government voided the elections for supposed irregularities, large demonstrations occurred. In turn, Noriega's thugs severely beat Endara and his running mate and murdered their bodyguards.[14] This outraged President

Bush to the point that he authorized deployment of additional troops. The deployments included:

Co. A, 2nd Marine Light Amphibious Battalion with wheeled Light Armored Vehicles (LAV)
1st Brigade headquarters, 7th Infantry Division
2nd Battalion, 9th Infantry
one battery, 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery
4th Battalion (-), 6th Infantry, 5th Infantry Division (Mechanized)

All but one company of the mechanized battalion moved by sea rather than air. The air force deployed a second AC-130 gunship to Panama; such gunships provided essential fire support for special operations. A second infantry battalion from the 7th Infantry Division also deployed under the fiction that it was going to the Jungle Training Center in Panama, even though it had not been scheduled to do so. Subsequently, the United States dispatched additional units that were concealed on its installations, including attack helicopters and a platoon of M551 Sheridan light tanks. Unlike the MPs, these troops were clearly intended for combat. The appearance of camouflaged soldiers from the 7th Infantry Division alarmed the PDF, which led in one instance to a near collision.[15] In October, Secretary Cheney also approved the unannounced deployment of an additional element headed by Maj. Gen. Gary Luck, commander of Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC was both a tactical headquarters for SOF and the army component of such operations). Luck's force package included one of three operational squadrons (companies) of the so-called Delta Force as well as sixteen additional helicopters, three signals intercept specialists, and a small staff. With the exception of the navy's Sea, Air, Land (SEAL) teams, Luck now had in Panama all the SOF elements earmarked to trap and capture Noriega in case of conflict.[16] All told, these troop deployments totaled fewer than 5,000 additional troops but greatly increased US capabilities on the ground. By the time the operation commenced, almost half of the 27,000 service members involved in the plan were already in-country.[17]

Simultaneously, the US government sought to reduce its vulnerability by sending some dependents and service members back to the United States and requiring others to move onto secured installations. This not only produced significant hardship for the families involved but also caused USARSO to lose some staff and support personnel that it needed to handle the expanded workload.

Beyond sending troops, the Bush administration authorized a more confrontational approach in dealing with the Panamanian military and government. In February 1989, Bush approved financial aid to Panamanian opposition

efforts, a fact that soon leaked to the press. In May, US forces began to conduct short-notice drills, sometimes using helicopters to air-land troops in close proximity to PDF barracks. A series of armed convoys with USAF aircraft flying overhead reasserted American defense rights under the 1977 treaties. Such operations seized the psychological initiative from Noriega, but by that point the dictator felt compelled to continue the confrontation in order to retain his control.

On September 30, 1989, Woerner turned over command to Gen. Maxwell Thurman. Thurman quickly immersed himself in his new position, but he understandably lacked the extensive local knowledge of his predecessor. The former J-3 (Operations) of SOUTHCOM and new commander of USARSO, Maj. Gen. Marc Cisneros, was a source of continuity during the transition, but Thurman apparently associated Cisneros mentally with Woerner's policies.[18]

The Cold War American Military

If the US military was ill-prepared to deal with the anomalous threat in Panama, by 1989 it was superbly poised to conduct two forms of more traditional military operations: mechanized maneuver warfare against the Soviet Union and short-notice deployment of so-called "contingency" forces such as XVIII Airborne Corps. After a decade of increased defense spending and strenuous training, the "peacetime" American military was better prepared for war than any of its previous incarnations since 1846.[19]

Despite significant budgetary and pay increases, the principal limitation on American forces was manpower. With the end of conscription in 1973, every active-duty soldier, sailor, or airman became an expensive commodity who was difficult to recruit—especially from the declining pool of young adults coming of age during the 1980s—and expensive to train, pay, and retain. This constraint forced the armed services to take a number of calculated risks in structuring themselves for the possibility of a "come-as-you-are" conflict against the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies.

To meet this threat, during the 1980s the US Army increased the number of active divisions to eighteen and National Guard divisions to ten; in each case there were also separate, brigade-sized units such as the 193rd Infantry Brigade in Panama and the 2nd and 11th Armored Cavalry Regiments in Germany. Four of the active army divisions and one of the National Guard divisions were light infantry formations like the 7th, specifically designed to be smaller and more easily deployable by air for the primary purpose of responding to lower-intensity contingencies. The trade-off was that such divisions would be less capable of fighting against mechanized formations, although the army intended to attach various antitank and other elements to such divisions if

they were deployed to Europe. There were also numerous efforts to increase the combat power of tactical units, such as the expansion of most artillery batteries from six tubes to eight and the addition of Multiple Launch Rocket Systems within the divisions.[20]

While reaching this total number of divisions, however, the active army actually reduced its strength by 6,800 soldiers between 1980 and 1989. To accomplish this card trick, the army not only limited the strength of the light divisions (approximately 10,500 troops vs. 18,000 for a "heavy" or mechanized division) but also eliminated entire types of support forces such as small engineer construction units. In addition, the active-duty divisions relied increasingly on augmentation from National Guard (or in one instance Army Reserve) brigades. At one time or another, eleven of the eighteen "active" divisions had reserve component "roundout brigades," with the actual active-duty division typically including only two of three brigade headquarters and six of ten maneuver battalions.[21] The roundout units received priority for new equipment and training, but it was challenging for a Guard unit to achieve proficiency with fewer than forty training days per year.

Quite apart from the roundout units, the active army was increasingly dependent on the reserve components for everything from chemical decontamination to maintenance. In any prolonged conflict, only civilian contractors could backfill deleted specialist positions in construction, transportation, and food preparation, a problem that would later become acute in Iraq.

The terrorism and other unconventional threats of the 1980s had also prompted the army to expand its special operations forces. In addition to Delta Force, by 1989 there were four active-duty Special Forces groups with a fifth in formation. The 1983 Grenada operation led to the expansion of Ranger units from two battalions to three with a Ranger regimental headquarters at Fort Benning. The 160th Aviation Group provided helicopter support to SOF. With the exception of the Rangers, however, even these SOF units were dependent on the reserve components. The Army National Guard and Army Reserve each housed two additional Special Forces groups, while the reserve components also provided a battalion (one-third) of SOF aviation units and 90 percent of civil affairs and psychological operations troops.[22]

Still, the 1980s had brought the army, both active and reserve, to a high standard of readiness, including a new generation of advanced weaponry such as the M1 Abrams Tank, the M2 Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle, and the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter. Even here there were some trade-offs, however. The M2 Bradley had better armor and armament than its predecessor, the M113 armored personnel carrier, but could accommodate fewer infantrymen inside. Indeed, SOUTHCOM specifically requested a mechanized battalion

(4th Battalion, 6th Infantry) that was equipped with the larger M113s in case it had to use those vehicles to evacuate civilians from exposed areas in Panama.

The US Navy also worked to expand its size under Reagan, although it never reached the aspirational objective of six hundred combatant ships, including fifteen aircraft carrier task forces. It did, however, add so many ships that the age of the fleet declined overall. This buildup included three additional *Nimitz*-class nuclear carriers during the decade, as well as dozens of other warships, especially *Spruance*-class destroyers and *Ticonderoga*-class Aegis guided missile cruisers. The Reagan buildup also included reactivation of four modernized *Iowa*-class battleships as the nuclei of missile-armed surface action groups to supplement the carriers. Equally significant was the advent of new weapons systems, such as the AV-8B vertical/short takeoff and landing fighter, the Light Airborne Multi-Purpose System for helicopter antisubmarine warfare, the Tomahawk cruise missile, and the Standard II surface-to-air missile. Like the army's new weapons, these systems were designed for high-intensity warfare against the Soviet bloc but proved equally effective in regional conflicts and limited strikes.

Augmenting the carrier air wings now built around the older A-6 Intruders and A-7 Corsair IIs were newer aircraft designed to fight in something the navy called the Outer-Air Battle (part of the 1984 Maritime Strategy), especially the F-14 Tomcat fighter with its AWG-9 radar and fire-and-forget Phoenix missile. The navy also remained at the forefront of electronic warfare, fielding the EA-6B Prowler, now armed with the AGM-88 High-speed Anti-Radiation Missile (HARM). Management of the air battle was turned over to the refurbished E-2C Hawkeye, the only propeller-driven aircraft in the air wing. Finally, the navy fielded the first generation of F/A-18 A/B Hornet strike fighters, meant to replace the A-7s but also to serve as deck-launched interceptors for the air battle. An updated S-3B Viking antisubmarine warfare aircraft rounded out this modernized air wing and included the new inverse synthetic aperture radar (ISAR) for imaging and searches.[23]

In order to meet its perceived wartime missions, the navy also placed greater stress on naval reservists; not coincidentally, the secretary of the navy from 1981 to 1987, John Lehman, was a reserve naval aviator. In addition to the twenty-two minesweepers that were already in the reserve structure, during the 1980s the US Navy expanded the number of active-reservist manned frigates and other escort vessels as well as fielding two reserve naval air wings. It was particularly difficult to maintain the carrier qualification of such air wings.

Like the other services, the US Air Force had to make personnel trade-offs to support new weapons capabilities. Most of its strategic bombers, ballistic missiles, and transport aircraft were designed in the 1950s, although their

designs were periodically upgraded. (The C-17 transport aircraft, intended to replace the workhorse C-141, did not become operational until 1995.) The USAF did profit from decades of development in tactical aircraft, beginning with the F-15. Originally designed as an air superiority fighter, the E version of the F-15 was a strike fighter that even provided the launching platform for tests of antisatellite weapons. This type of capability came with a high price tag to build and operate, and thus the Tactical Air Command (TAC) had to include other aircraft types to expand its capabilities.

From the army's perspective, the foremost of these alternatives was the A-10, unofficially termed the "Warthog," built to survive significant ground fire while providing massive fire support on the ground. Its 30 mm automatic gun firing depleted-uranium rounds was specifically intended to chew up Soviet armor. First deployed in the late 1970s, the A-10 underwent numerous upgrades and modifications over its service life. From the air force's viewpoint, however, the A-10 was a highly specialized weapon that depended on other aircraft to achieve air superiority over the battlefield. Given restrictions on the size of the active USAF, TAC therefore sought to limit the number of A-10s in the active force, preferring to assign it to Air National Guard squadrons while substituting additional F-16s, a multirole airframe that was significantly less expensive than the F-15, in the active force.[24] The 1991 conflict in the Persian Gulf would provide a test of this trade-off.

There were other new weapons in the air force arsenal. Although TV-guided weapons provided the first precision ordnance during the later stages of the Vietnam conflict, only during the 1980s did air force and navy aircraft have a significant supply of precision-guided munitions (PGMs), first using inertial guidance and later satellite navigation. While the majority of ordnance remained "dumb" gravity bombs, precision-guided bombs and cruise missiles promised to revolutionize air warfare by sharply reducing the number of sorties necessary to neutralize a target. Along with this precision, the USAF had also fielded the first low-observable or "stealth" aircraft, the F-117A.

Training and education were also key to the marked increase in American military capabilities. The all-volunteer force was expensive, but longer enlistments permitted training to a higher level than the revolving-door structure of a conscript force. For the first time, the services developed schools and standards for the systematic development of professional noncommissioned officers. For unit proficiency, the services invested in elaborately calibrated training at locations such as Fort Irwin, in California, plus Nellis Air Force Base and Naval Air Station Fallon, located in Nevada. While the primary focus of such centers was fighting the Soviet threat, their desert environment provided a useful background to subsequent deployments to the Middle East.

With the major services placing increasing reliance on reserve components, the full-time manning of those components was important. The citizen-soldier tradition meant that the Army Reserve and Army National Guard had reserve leaders at almost every level with a minimum of full-time personnel, primarily administrative, in most ground units. The maintenance demands of aircraft necessitated greater full-time support for the Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve, and Naval Air Force Reserve. By contrast, the Marine Corps had active-duty leaders and administrators at many levels within the USMC Reserve, including the 4th Marine Division, a reserve air wing, and various nondivisional specialized units. Yet the rapid decline of the Soviet Union had already placed this division of manpower, like the rest of the defense budget, in jeopardy by 1989.

One final development of the 1980s would also have its first test in Panama: the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, which intended to improve the interservice "jointness" of the armed forces. Both the secretary of defense and the appropriate unified commander, Thurman, had enhanced authority over the armed forces. Although he was an army officer, CINCSO had unprecedented operational control over air, naval, and marine elements.

Lighting the Fuse

On October 3, just days after Thurman took over as CINCSO, another military coup failed in Panama. The leader of the plot, Maj. Moises Giroldi, was a protégé of Noriega who apparently believed that he could force the dictator to retire without killing him or putting him on trial. Through an intermediary, Giroldi contacted Thurman, but both CINCSO and leaders in Washington concluded that the plot was hopelessly naive if not a deception intended to implicate the United States. As requested, US forces blocked some routes that loyalist forces might use to rescue Noriega, but in general they avoided involvement in such a dubious adventure. By some accounts, the unarmed Noriega simply brazened it out with Giroldi. Regardless of the details, the plot failed, and the Bush administration received heavy criticism for again failing to resolve the situation.[25]

Prior to this failure, the civilians in the Bush administration had apparently hoped that Noriega would lose power without direct American military action. Thereafter, however, the same leaders concluded that an American military solution might well be necessary. The newly installed chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Colin Powell, reflected these concerns when he told General Thurman to maximize the use of forces already in-country, while reducing the reaction time from decision to execution from five days to two.

This growing consensus may have contributed to a desire to intervene in the Philippines, where on December 1 supporters of former first lady Imelda

Marcos attempted to seize power from President Corazon Aquino. Aquino requested American intervention against rebellious portions of the Philippine Air Force, but General Powell suggested a limited response. The most visible aspect of this response was for USAF F-4 fighters, based in the islands, to "buzz" rebel airfields; although authorized to shoot under limited circumstances, this minimal demonstration of US support for the elected government helped Aquino retain power.[26]

Meanwhile, Noriega became increasingly concerned by his own erosion of support. During the two months following the October coup attempt, the Panamanian regime directed or at least encouraged an escalation of harassment attacks on American service members and civilians. By Sunday, December 17, 1989, these attacks had convinced President Bush to decide on military intervention.

Operation Just Cause: Plans and Special Operations

During 1988–89, Southern Command, US Army South, XVIII Airborne Corps, and the Joint Staff went through multiple iterations of plans to take down the Panamanian Defense Forces. The final results were the overall USCINCSO Operations Order (OPORD) 1–90 (Blue Spoon), dated 30 October 1989, and Joint Task Force (JTF)–South Operations Plan (OPLAN) 90–2, 3 November 1989. The latter plan was prepared by XVIII Airborne Corps, which formally became JTF-South when the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued the execution order on December 18.[27] Flown into Howard Air Force Base, Guillermo Endara, whom the United States regarded as the legitimate winner of the May 1989 elections, took the oath of office as president of Panama just before H-hour to provide a fig leaf of legitimacy to the US intervention.

The CJCS execution order focused heavily on the need to use minimum force, in large measure because of the presence of American and Panamanian civilians throughout the battle space. In order to accomplish the goal under such constraints, the plans sought to attack twenty-seven different installations simultaneously so that resistance would be impossible. The offensive was scheduled to begin at night when the element of surprise as well as American night vision devices would give additional advantages. When briefed on the plans, some members of the Joint Chiefs were skeptical of the scale of the operation against a PDF whose actual combat troops numbered fewer than 4,000. This overwhelming force included thousands of soldiers dropping by parachute and precision bombs dropped by F-117As.[28]

Underneath JTF-South were a number of task forces for specific areas of Panama as well as for service components (USAF, USMC, and so on). One command issue was resolved, as a practical matter, by subordinating the Joint

Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) to JTF-South, relying on General Stiner's long experience in special operations as well as the physical proximity at Fort Bragg of XVIII Airborne Corps and JSOC, from which the two task force staffs were drawn.

Maj. Gen. Wayne Downing assumed command of both JSOC and JSOTF just days before the execution order for Panama. JSOTF missions included both capturing Noriega and more conventional assaults to neutralize specific PDF units. Third Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group, also conducted a number of oddball missions, ranging from controlling a bridge over the Pacora River (to block movement of the PDF's principal mechanized force, Battalion 2000), to securing a dam, to disabling a television transmitter so that a USAF psychological operations team could broadcast its own version of events to the public. The Pacora River bridge mission was initially hampered by a shortage of helicopter lift, but the Green Berets arrived in time to block the bridge and call down AC-130 fire on Battalion 2000, the (supposedly) most capable force in the PDF, when it attempted to cross.[29] On the Atlantic end of the canal, eight SEALs and eleven Special Boat Unit sailors neutralized PDF patrol boats without incident.

SOF groups had a mixed record in neutralizing Noriega's forces, however. SOF operations are inherently high risk, and unpredictable developments may eliminate the element of surprise and leave SOF exposed to the enemy. General Downing's forces raided several locations where the dictator might be found, but initially they came up empty-handed. At exactly 0100 hours, the originally scheduled H-hour for the operations, four swimmers from SEAL Team 2 blew up Noriega's armed personal patrol boat, the *Presidente Porras*, in Balboa Harbor, the Pacific-side terminus of the canal. Three SEAL platoons were less successful at nearby Paitilla Airport, in large measure because the JCS emphasis on minimum force required the SEALs to disable rather than destroy a Learjet that Noriega might have used to escape. Panamanian guards at the hangers had oil drums and cinder block walls to provide cover when engaging the attackers as the latter crossed the runway. The SEALs drove off the defenders and disabled the aircraft, but in the brief firefight four attackers died and eight more were seriously wounded. A communications problem prevented support from a USAF AC-130H, although elsewhere these "Spectre" aircraft provided devastating fire against defenders.[30] This was only the first of several instances during the ensuing decade where the absence of Spectre fire support proved costly to SOF troops. Nonetheless, the JSOTF had blocked Noriega's exits even if he remained a fugitive at large for some time.

Numerically, the most significant operations of Just Cause were the airborne assaults on two key airfields. The first of these, the Torrijos-Tocumen complex,

was the principal civilian airport for Panama City, located some thirteen miles northeast of the city. It housed the 2nd PDF Infantry Company and much of the small Panamanian Air Force and offered a major port of debarkation for follow-on forces. Rio Hato, on the Pacific coast some fifty miles southwest of the capital, housed the 7th and 8th PDF Infantry Companies as well as a noncommissioned officer academy and one of Noriega's alternate residences.

After extensive practice exercises in Florida, the 75th Ranger Regiment, designated Task Force Red-R and including various attachments of medical, psychological operations, and civil affairs teams, parachuted onto both airfields. The 2nd and 3rd Ranger Battalions, the latter reduced by one company, went to Rio Hato. At the same time, the regimental headquarters, 1st Battalion, and Company C of the 3rd Battalion dropped on Torrijos-Tocumen. This element included a nine-man team assigned to establish a rearm and refuel point for special operations helicopters.[31]

Even in peacetime, airborne drops are inherently dangerous; by one calculation, one Ranger died and thirty-three were injured in the drop on Torrijos-Tocumen, including numerous impact injuries on pavement.[32] The air force transport pilots delivered most of the paratroopers on target, although a few Rangers were blown off course into difficult terrain. In planning this drop, staff officers had anticipated that the international air terminal building would be almost empty in the middle of the night, whereas the late arrival of a commercial flight from Brazil had in fact injected almost four hundred civilian passengers and airline employees into the midst of the landing. The few PDF defenders not only resisted the Rangers clearing the building but took several hostages. By the time the Rangers had secured the terminal, after almost four hours of fighting, they had suffered one killed and eight wounded, while the defenders lost thirteen killed, fifty-four taken prisoner, and a number of wounded. As this struggle went on, the division headquarters and a reinforced brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division had parachuted onto Torrijos-Tocumen, with the division assuming operational control of the 1st Ranger Battalion.[33]

Meanwhile, the rest of the Ranger Regiment encountered opposition that was alert and dispersed, ready to fight, at Rio Hato.[34] In 1983, the Ranger assault in Grenada had been handicapped by a lack of qualified air transport crews, but this time the USAF was able to fully support the operation with experienced special operations pilots for the C-130 series aircraft. Fortunately for the attackers, their drop was preceded by considerable fire preparations. In addition to the F-117A bombs intended to overawe the PDF, an AC-130 Spectre gunship, two AH-64 Apache attack helicopters, and four AH-6 Little Bird special operations helicopters fired up the area, knocking out several defensive positions including at least one of the three ZPU-4 antiaircraft guns.

Thirty-six Rangers suffered significant injuries in the drop at Rio Hato, in some instances because they carried rucksacks and other equipment weighing one hundred pounds or more when they landed on pavement. Once on the ground, the troops had to deal with the usual confusion attendant on parachute landings. Light antitank weapons (LAWs) took out several armed PDF trucks, and a series of firefights occurred both around the airfield and in clearing barracks buildings. Ninety minutes after the initial parachute assault, the first MC-130H Combat Talon aircraft began landing Ranger vehicles and then establishing the helicopter refueling and rearmament point. In the confusion of clearing the last pockets of defenders, two AH-6 helicopters mistakenly fired on Rangers, killing two and wounding four. In total, the Rio Hato operation cost four Americans killed and twenty-seven wounded in action, in addition to the jump injuries; 34 Panamanian defenders died and 362 became prisoners.

Operation Just Cause: The Conventional Fight

Simultaneously with the high-risk and highly visible special and airborne operations, US forces already in Panama fought a number of more conventional but equally deadly clashes. Perhaps the most significant such action occurred at the Comandancia, a complex of more than a dozen buildings that housed much of the PDF's command and control as well as two companies of infantry. It was located in a barrio of Panama City near the Pacific Ocean and less than six hundred yards downhill from SOUTHCOM headquarters on Quarry Heights.

When the Rangers were reassigned to attack Rio Hato, the 193rd Infantry Brigade (TF Bayonet) acquired the Comandancia as a priority target. In turn, TF Bayonet assigned this target to the closest approximation it had to a "heavy" or mechanized unit: TF Gator. Led by Lt. Col. James Reed, this task force included the headquarters plus two M113 companies of the 4th Battalion, 6th Infantry, as well as Company C of the 1st Battalion, 508th Airborne Infantry, platoons of M551 Sheridan light tanks and marine light amphibious vehicles (LAVs), two platoons of MPs, and a platoon of combat engineers.[35]

All these elements had the advantage of being in-country when the operation began, but that proved to be a mixed blessing because they had to assemble from different installations. As a result, the various units began moving forty-five minutes before the official H-hour of 0100. There were additional complications, such as the difficulty of reconnoitering the objective without disclosing American interest in it. Finally, because the no-notice version of a takedown (known as High Anxiety) involved a Delta Force element conducting the actual assault on the Comandancia, TF Gator found itself in elaborate and sometimes restrictive negotiations with special operators. At one point, the SOF planners wanted to forbid any Spectre gunship support inside the complex because of the

danger of setting off a fuel storage tank. Lieutenant Colonel Reed negotiated a compromise, whereby the AC-130 crew could employ their 40 mm automatic guns but not the 105 mm howitzer carried on board. Moreover, when TF Gator reverted from JSOTF to TF Bayonet control in the midst of the operation, Reed lost communication with one of his teams that was supporting the special operators. This so-called Panzergruppen first secured the US embassy and later helped hunt for Noriega.[36]

On the night of December 20, while en route to the Comandancia, one of the mechanized companies returned fire from Panamanian police. Other encounters seemed to indicate the opposition had been forewarned, so Thurman authorized starting earlier, which meant a hurried change of H-hour from 0100 to 1245. At the start of the operation, the Sheridans and LAVs took up an overwatching position with orders to engage any Cadillac Gage armored cars of the PDF. Pursuant to the guidance for minimum use of force, before attacking, TF Gator used loudspeakers to call on the defenders to surrender. However, a significant number of PDF soldiers had already armed themselves and dispersed in the neighborhood. Snipers on the rooftops shot down one AH-6 gunship, and the two-man crew had to find shelter inside the compound, knowing that two Spectre gunships were scheduled to open fire. Fortunately for these crew members, the aircraft directed fire primarily at the upper stories of the PDF command building, after which one of the AC-130s diverted to other targets.

The PDF also used dump trucks to block the advance of Company B of 4-6 Infantry, but after killing one M113 commander, the defenders were otherwise such poor marksmen that they lost the ensuing firefight. One enterprising American soldier used his M113 to drag obstacles sufficiently for most of the company to scrape past them, allowing the infantry to put a perimeter around the northern portion of the complex in an hour. Meanwhile, Company D was able to bypass a similar dump truck obstacle but thereafter suffered numerous casualties from PDF fire. Because the Sheridans and LAVs were unable to engage from their overwatch position, Reed brought some of the armor down to reinforce his infantry but held his forces outside the complex until daylight.

The Comandancia buildings caught fire, and the blaze spread to neighboring civilian buildings. PDF soldiers in civilian clothes infiltrated groups of displaced persons, making target identification difficult and further delaying operations. At 2:45 that afternoon, fire from attack helicopters, Sheridans, and 90 mm recoilless rifles laid down a preparation before a mixed group of 1-508 paratroopers and 3-75 Rangers (from Tocumen) cleared the buildings systematically. Thereafter, TF Gator's tracked vehicles were dispersed to secure a number of areas in the city, making resupply and maintenance of the tracks difficult.

While the Comandancia absorbed so much attention, nearby Fort Amador was a special problem because the 5th PDF Infantry Company was intermixed with American military housing. First Battalion, 508th Infantry, already had its headquarters located there, but it had to use overloaded helicopters to air assault two of its own companies into the fort to secure it.[37]

No military operation is ever executed without some errors. An ice storm at Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina caused slight delays in dispatch of the C-141s that dropped 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, whereas the heavy equipment drop, flying out of Charleston, was on schedule. As a result, the parachuted pallets of equipment actually arrived a few minutes before the troops they were intended to support.[38] Once the 82nd troops arrived, they conducted three helicopter assaults to reduce the remaining PDF garrisons. Not surprisingly, these daylight heliborne assaults against alerted opponents incurred significant costs in both aircraft and casualties. Once on the ground, some of the paratroopers who had started the day in freezing temperatures in North Carolina suffered heat injuries in tropical Panama.[39]

Noriega himself evaded capture for several days, then used the religious significance of Christmas Eve to persuade the papal nuncio, equivalent to an ambassador, to give him sanctuary. US psychological operations loudspeakers blasted music at the building in an effort to deprive the fugitive of sleep. After being given one of his uniforms to wear, the ex-dictator surrendered on the evening of January 3, 1990, and was immediately flown to the United States for trial on drug charges. By that time, most of the SOF troops had returned to base, while remaining American units found themselves pressed into service to organize and train a new, civilianized, Panamanian police force.

Assessment

Once executed, the Blue Spoon plan became known as "Just Cause," a public relations name apparently coined by the Joint Staff director of current operations (J-33), then-Rear Adm. T. "Joe" Lopez. The operation had cost the United States 23 killed (including 2 by friendly fire) and 324 injured or wounded (including 19 by friendly fire). SOUTHCOM estimated that Panama suffered 324 military and 202 civilian deaths, although the actual casualties may well have been higher.[40] Any losses, let alone losses at the hands of fellow soldiers or the death of innocent civilians, are tragic and deeply regrettable. Given the close intermingling of American and Panamanian soldiers and civilians, however, the toll could have been far worse, reflecting well-disciplined and trained professional soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.

Operation Just Cause appeared to vindicate the enormous efforts and defense expenditures of the 1970s and 1980s. To his credit, President Bush had

tried all the other tools of power—diplomatic, informational, and economic—before finally using the strongest tool in his kit, the military. Yet, the prompt resolution of a complex strategic problem may have encouraged civilian leaders to turn to the military option in future circumstances. The electoral victory of Endara in May 1989 allowed the United States to return control to Panamanians rapidly after the intervention, thereby avoiding the difficulties of a prolonged American military occupation—unfortunately for the United States, no such democratic alternative government would be available in Afghanistan or Iraq in 2003.[41]

The superb American force, along with the intelligence community necessary to use that option in an informed manner, was about to wither on the vine. The rapid decline of the Soviet Union had already placed military manning, like the rest of the defense budget, in jeopardy. The threats posed by Manuel Noriega and Saddam Hussein postponed but did not halt serious defense reductions. When he visited Panama two days after Noriega's surrender, General Powell tried to underline the continued need for military capabilities despite the changing international situation. He urged his listeners: "Don't bust this apart. . . . Don't think that this is the time to demobilize the armed force of the United States because it isn't. There are still dangers in the world."[42]

CHAPTER 2

Desert Shield/Desert Storm

Kuwait, July–August 1990

Between July 7 and 10, 1990, three "heavy" (armored or mechanized) divisions—the Hammurabi, Medina, and Tawakalna—of the Iraqi Republican Guard Corps (RGC) moved by rail from the center of their country to assembly areas less than fifty kilometers north of the oil-rich neighboring state of Kuwait. The As Saiqa (Lightning) Special Operations Division and four RGC infantry divisions joined them over the next ten days. President George H. W. Bush and Defense Secretary Richard Cheney both made public statements to the effect that the United States would take seriously any threats to friends in the Persian Gulf region, but their comments were not specifically aimed at Iraq's ongoing dispute with Kuwait concerning oil rights. When Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein summoned American Ambassador April Glaspie on July 25, Glaspie had no instructions beyond saying that the United States wanted a peaceful resolution to the dispute. Saddam misinterpreted this statement to mean that the United States would not intervene.[1]

The concentration of Iraq's best troops seemed far more threatening than would be necessary as a mere show of force to Kuwait. The scant handful of Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) analysts who performed current intelligence on Iraq for the Joint Chiefs of Staff J-2 section became convinced that the most likely outcome was that Iraq would seize the northern bulge of Kuwait, which contained much of the oil.[2] CIA analysts reportedly agreed. The Defense Intelligence Officer for the Middle East and South Asia, W. Patrick Lang, repeatedly advocated this interpretation to senior Defense Department leaders, as did the J-2 director, Rear Adm. J. Michael McConnell. Yet, the overall situation was unclear, and top officials of the Bush administration did not perceive a genuine threat in time to deter an invasion, even if deterrence were possible at such a late

date. On August 2–3, 1990, Iraq easily overran its smaller neighbor and soon thereafter began to concentrate the same RGC troops along the Kuwaiti border with Saudi Arabia. The most significant obstacle to a further Iraqi advance was the logistical challenge of resupplying RGC units beyond Iraq's borders.

One can only conjecture Saddam's motivation for this invasion. Having failed to conquer southwestern Iran, the dictator needed both a victory and an infusion of cash. He apparently believed that Kuwait's oil and physical access to the Gulf, in combination with the intimidation value of his military action, would give him a dominant role in the region, and quite probably in the Arab League and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Once Iraq seized Kuwait, he was unwilling to lose face by disgorging it, choosing instead to underestimate the threats posed against him. Based on the bloody suffering of the Iran-Iraq War, Saddam was convinced that his military would inflict high casualty rates that his opponents and especially the United States would be unwilling to accept. As a military amateur, he misread the likely nature of any conflict over Kuwait.[3]

The Bush administration initially focused on financial sanctions against Baghdad, but the president soon concluded that stronger measures, possibly involving force, were necessary to expel Saddam from Kuwait. General Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, emphasized that building the requisite forces even to defend Saudi Arabia would take months, but the first step was to obtain permission from the host nations to move US troops into the region. After hesitating, Fahd bin Abdul-Aziz al Saud, the king of Saudi Arabia, reluctantly agreed to receive Secretary Cheney and a group of aides, including intelligence briefers, on August 5, 1990. The purpose of this mission was to offer forces but not to cajole the Saudis; only in retrospect did the Cheney trip seem so inevitable. Cheney pledged that President Bush would help defend the kingdom and withdraw troops whenever Fahd asked, and the king immediately agreed to the deployment. On his way home, Cheney stopped to ensure the support of President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and King Hassan of Morocco.[4]

This prompt decision to accept American forces startled the king's subjects even more than it surprised his American visitors. The idea of foreign troops in the land of Mecca and Medina outraged many Muslims. The as yet unknown Osama bin Laden saw this as the prelude to an occupation similar to the Soviet move into Afghanistan, and he began to recruit Saudi youths to fight the invaders as well as the complicit Arab governments. One of bin Laden's blind spots was that he simply assumed an American intention to remain in Saudi Arabia, and later in Somalia, not realizing that the "invaders" had no desire to control either place.[5]

Ba'ath Party and Saddam Hussein

The collision between Saddam Hussein and the United States was decades in the making. The first step came in the 1930s, when two Syrian intellectuals, Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, absorbed fascist ideas while studying in Paris. By 1947, Aflaq and al-Bitar were among the organizers of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party. The ideology of the Ba'ath (Renaissance, or Rebirth) Party was a Pan-Arab version of German National Socialism. It was inherently secular rather than confessional; Aflaq was Christian rather than Muslim, and the party included both Shi'a and Sunni Muslims.[6] After the Ba'athists seized power in Syria in 1966, al-Bitar was a minister in the Egyptian-Syrian union known as the United Arab Republic, Gamal Abdel Nasser's ill-fated attempt to restore Arab unity.

The Ba'ath ideology spread to Iraq, the artificial state formed in 1921 by Great Britain out of portions of the former Turkish empire. Iraq included Kurds in the north, the Shi'a Muslims who made up the majority of the population, especially in the south, and a small but influential Sunni Muslim population, not to mention other, much smaller groups. In a 1963 Baghdad coup, a group of officers backed by the local Ba'ath Party overthrew the previous dictator, Abd al-Karim Qasim. In 1968, the Ba'athists forced the ruling revolutionary council to expand to include civilian members of their party, with Saddam Hussein as vice president. Saddam gradually took control of the country by inserting his followers, many of them Sunnis from his hometown of Tikrit, in key positions.[7] In 1979, when the Iraqi president attempted to negotiate a Ba'athist merger with Syria, Saddam forced that president to retire, then purged the party to ensure personal loyalty to him.

The Iraq that the new strongman took control of had ample oil revenues, a burgeoning economy, an unusually large (for the region) middle class, and the beginnings of a sense of Iraqi, rather than sectarian, identity. Unfortunately, Saddam had ambitions to become the dominant power in the region. Oil money paid for an extensive inventory of Soviet weapons, including (by 1980) 2,200 T-55 and T-62 tanks plus 150 of the newest, export-model T-72Ms. What money could not buy was expertise in operating and maintaining such weapons, especially advanced combat aircraft.

Saddam also pushed the manufacture and employment of chemical agents that caused blisters (mustard gas) or death by attacking the central nervous system (Sarin). Although incidents involving chemical weapons occurred as early as 1982, the most infamous case was the March 16, 1988, gas attack on the rebellious Kurds, an event known as the Halubjah massacre; thousands of civilians died.[8]

Western intelligence agencies later learned that Saddam had also poured money into developing biological and nuclear weapons. A clandestine program to build nuclear weapons began as early as 1973.[9] The intelligence services of both Israel and Iran became concerned by this program, especially the cluster of reactors and enrichment activities at Tuwaitha, eleven miles (18 km) south-southeast of Baghdad. On June 7, 1981, the Israeli Air Force bombed the French-supplied Osiris nuclear reactor under construction at Tuwaitha, but the process of refining and enriching uranium continued. Despite massive government spending to purify uranium, this program did not reach fruition before the 1991 conflict.

Meanwhile, Iraq used its chemical weapons against both Kurds and Iranians. Saddam apparently believed that the 1979 revolution against the shah had rendered Iran impotent, so on September 22, 1980, he launched a preemptive attack to seize the oil fields and port cities of southwestern Iran. The remnants of the shah's armed forces, combined with thousands of fanatical young revolutionaries, soon turned Saddam's brief incursion into a prolonged and ultimately unsuccessful war of attrition. Exhausted, the two sides made peace in 1988, but all Saddam had to show for his efforts were mountains of casualties and debts. His Republican Guard and army were indeed filled with combat veterans, but those veterans were accustomed to fighting a positional conflict more akin to World War I than to the maneuver warfare practiced by the United States. Moreover, Iraqi weapons needed replacement after years of harsh operations—many tanks and artillery pieces had gun tubes that were so worn that shells fired through those tubes lacked both range and accuracy.

Some Arab states had provided Saddam with financial aid against the Shi'a revolutionary regime of Iran; even the United States offered intelligence data because of its own enduring antipathy to Tehran. Once peace returned, however, this assistance dried up. The Iraqi dictator invaded Kuwait as a way of recouping his losses and presenting himself to his people as a conqueror.

Building the Shield

In November 1988, Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf Jr. became commander in chief, Central Command (CINCCENT), responsible for US military operations in most of the Middle East. Recognizing the decline of the Cold War Soviet threat, he reprioritized Central Command (CENTCOM) planning to focus on the defense of the Arabian Peninsula (Operations Plan 1002) rather than a possible Soviet invasion of Iran. Not coincidentally, in late July 1990 CENTCOM conducted a major planning exercise, Internal Look 90, built around OPLAN 1002, making the staffs involved intimately familiar with the issues of that plan. Subsequent military deployments roughly followed the

1002 scenario, although initially the lack of prior warning made American responses painfully slow.[10] The distances involved were daunting: 7,000 miles (11,265 km) or fourteen hours by air, with the heavy equipment taking up to 12,000 miles (19,300 km) or thirty-one days by sea. For the first time since the Civilian Reserve Air Fleet was founded in 1951, the USAF activated Stage I of that fleet, taking control of eighteen commercial passenger and twenty-two cargo aircraft on August 18. A Stage II activation occurred when hostilities began, but by that time most of the aircraft eligible for such an activation were already flying on defense contracts.[11] In retrospect, the ability to deploy and sustain units over such distances was at least as significant as the training and capabilities of those forces. Nor was it simply a matter of transportation. Most M1 tanks were upgraded to M1A1s with a larger main gun, while support staffs struggled to change vehicle camouflage and individual uniforms from green forest to brown desert.

Even the 82nd Airborne Division, with its limited capability against a mechanized opponent, did not complete deployment until September 9. Had Iraq advanced during the early weeks, the combined Saudi and American forces would have been unlikely to stop the aggressor.[12] To counterbalance this threat, AH-64 attack helicopters arrived by transport airlift despite the heavy cost in aircraft sorties. Meanwhile, the lack of American-flagged cargo ships made the movement of heavy equipment by sea problematic; it was a major struggle to find enough qualified merchant seamen for the deployment.

The US Army component of the defensive "Desert Shield" was built around a reinforced XVIII Airborne Corps. In addition to the 82nd Airborne Division, this eventually included the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Division, the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), and the 1st Cavalry Division, plus the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and (from Europe) the 12th Aviation Brigade. Specialized units, including Patriot air defense batteries from the 11th Air Defense Brigade as well as limited logistical support, rounded out the force. Although the president authorized mobilizing 200,000 reservists for six months each, Secretary Cheney initially put severe limitations on the number who could be activated. Partly as a result of such limits, the army substituted active-duty brigades for the roundout National Guard units of the 24th Infantry and 1st Cavalry: the 197th Infantry Brigade and the 1st Brigade, 2nd Armored Division, respectively.[13] The Department of Defense eventually mobilized the appropriate roundout brigades, but never deployed them, instead relegating the guardsmen to endless training exercises in the United States. Similarly, Third Army chose not to deploy the Army Reserve's 335th Theater Signal Command, which had trained specifically for the CENTCOM mission, and instead improvised an active-duty headquarters.[14] Other reserve component units, especially artillery,

engineers, military police, psychological operations, and logistical support, were essential to CENTCOM's force and did deploy, however.

The initial deployment of marines was faster because a brigade set of equipment and supplies was already carried aboard Maritime Prepositioning Squadron 2, based at Diego Garcia, the British-held atoll just south of the equator in the Indian Ocean. This allowed the 7th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) to arrive at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, beginning on August 14, 1990, before the Saudi government was prepared to position this force. The 7th MEB consisted of the brigade-sized 7th Marine Regimental Combat Team plus Marine Aircraft Group 70. In late August, the 1st MEB arrived, to take over equipment carried by Maritime Prepositioning Squadron 3, which had sailed from Guam to the Persian Gulf. A third element, the 4th MEB, initially remained afloat, while two specialized roll-on, roll-off ships moved much of the equipment for the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. Within a month, Lt. Gen. Walter E. Boomer's I Marine Expeditionary Force had most elements of the 1st Marine Division, 3rd Aircraft Wing, and its support group in theater.[15]

Three aircraft carriers were near the theater when the conflict broke out: USS *Independence* in the North Arabian Sea, USS *Dwight Eisenhower* in the Mediterranean, and USS *Saratoga* entering the Mediterranean to relieve the *Eisenhower.* The *Eisenhower* remained and passed through the Suez Canal on August 7. By August 8, the carrier was on station in the Red Sea. The *Independence* was on station in the Gulf of Oman within strike range, but in September it entered the Persian Gulf to be able to react more quickly, the first time an aircraft carrier of that size had ever moved into these restricted waters. These carriers provided the initial tactical air component of Desert Shield. Each carrier embarked approximately sixty attack and strike aircraft, including the only active electronic-countermeasures aircraft in either EUCOM or CENTCOM with which to degrade the Iraqi air defenses should Saddam Hussein invade Saudi Arabia. The US Navy had two other "ready carrier battle groups" for deployment, built around the USS *John F. Kennedy* in Norfolk, Virginia, and the USS *Midway* in the Western Pacific. Both of these carriers deployed within two months of notification: the *Kennedy* arrived first in the Red Sea in September and the *Midway* relieved the *Independence* by November 1. The *Eisenhower* and the *Independence*, both at the end of long deployments, returned to the United States. Two more carrier groups built around the USS *America* and the USS *Theodore Roosevelt* readied to augment the other three carriers. Finally, a sixth carrier, the USS *Ranger*, joined the *Midway* in the Gulf prior to the opening of combat operations in January.[16] While the number of vessels involved was relatively small, the wholesale logistics necessary to support these vessels were almost as complex as those involved for the other services.

During the initial two months of the deployment, US forces were so vulnerable that General Schwarzkopf and other decision-makers prioritized sending combat elements ahead of logistics units. The result was a temporary imbalance, with consequent shortages of supplies and maintenance. For similar reasons, the intelligence architecture of the theater also lagged. Prior to the invasion of Kuwait, Central Command and its subordinate headquarters, like their counterparts in SOUTHCOM, were skeletonized and especially short of intelligence collection and analysis. Moreover, for diplomatic reasons no tactical air reconnaissance was permitted over Kuwait prior to hostilities. This made the deployed units highly dependent on national-level intelligence, especially imagery, to the point where DIA's Intelligence Task Force (ITF) in the Pentagon found itself performing tactical tasks. For example, the ITF annotated seven imagery copies of each Iraqi tactical position, so that battalion commanders in theater could plan. Unfortunately for the overall effort, some copies of this imagery remained at the CENTCOM and component headquarters in Riyadh, rather than reaching their intended destination. Wing intelligence officers in particular complained that they rarely received imagery of their assigned bombing targets.[17] Frustrated, some staff officers resorted to back-channel methods, bypassing multiple headquarters to get information and imagery directly from national agencies.

F-15Cs of the Saudi Air Force, joined almost immediately by forty-eight more F-15Cs of the 1st Tactical Fighter Wing and directed by E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft, covered the initial airlift of ground troops. RC-135 Rivet Joint signals intelligence aircraft also arrived early. By the end of August, two Royal Air Force and fourteen USAF/USMC tactical fighter squadrons were based in the region, with a B-52 squadron on Diego Garcia.[18]

Gathering the Storm

As these forces took shape in northern Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf States, General Powell continued to press the political leadership for a definition of their mission. Was the growing multinational force there for strictly defensive, containment purposes, or was there also an offensive component, intending to liberate Kuwait or even overthrow the Iraqi regime?

Few recognized that the deployment of such a large American force made conflict much more likely. Powell conjectured that Saddam might withdraw a small portion of his troops back to Iraq simply to give the Arab states an excuse to claim that the crisis had been averted. In practice, both sides had committed their prestige to the matter and could not draw back without the appearance of failure. The continued US deployment was expensive in monetary and political terms, while the reserve component troops supporting CENTCOM were

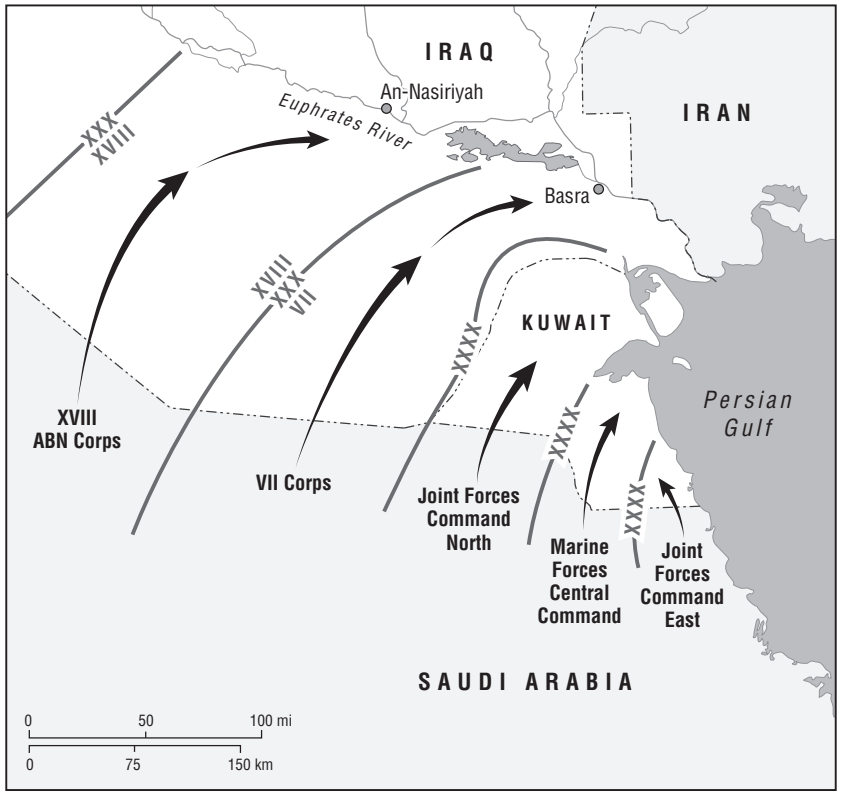
initially limited to 180 days of active duty. As time passed, the level of troop training would decline, while the approach of summer would make military operations, especially operations wearing chemical protective equipment, physically challenging.

More concerned by internal stability than external threats, the Iraqi dictator planned to wait out the Americans while consolidating his hold over Kuwait as Iraq's "nineteenth province." In 1991 and later in 2003, Saddam believed that the United States was so averse to casualties that it would either never act or limit itself to minor attacks. He measured military prowess in terms of casualties sustained, a calculation that made even the American losses in Vietnam appear insignificant in comparison to the hundreds of thousands Iraq had lost in its conflict with Iran.[19]

As in so much else, the CENTCOM Internal Look exercise of July 1990 had been the first steps in planning for the war to come. Once Desert Shield began, the initial draft air tasking orders produced by CENTCOM's air component (CENTAF) planners were primarily defensive in nature. At the request of General Schwarzkopf, however, Air Force Headquarters provided the later famous "Instant Thunder" concept for an intensive air campaign against Iraq. The CENTAF commander, Lt. Gen. Charles Horner, felt that Instant Thunder needed to include additional targeting directly against Iraqi forces inside Kuwait. By mid-September, Central Command's air force planners combined these two sets of targets to produce their first concept for the air elements of an offensive.[20] USAF chief of staff Gen. Michael Dugan spoke openly of bombing as the only option, an impolitic statement for which Cheney relieved him on September 17.[21]

Yet, if President Bush chose offensive action, which appeared increasingly likely, Schwarzkopf would need more ground forces to enforce the expulsion of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Throughout the fall of 1990, Saddam continued to call up reservists and move troops into Kuwait. Eventually, the Iraqi army positioned some twenty-nine infantry and seven armored or mechanized divisions in defensive positions near the Saudi border; behind them stood an expanded Republican Guard force of seven additional mechanized and motorized divisions. Regardless of the relative capabilities and training of the two forces, this was a formidable array. Because the actual strength of these units was difficult to determine, the CIA and DIA agreed to consider all these units as being filled to 100 percent of authorized equipment and personnel. This cautious assumption compounded the subsequent difficulties of determining the attrition of these enemy units under the effects of air strikes.[22]

With the I MEF (at that time equivalent to a reinforced division) and the four army divisions originally deployed under XVIII Corps, dealing with this



Desert Storm, 1991. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

Iraqi force was a major challenge. Including the equivalent of two Saudi divisions, two Egyptian divisions, and one each from Britain and France improved the balance only marginally. When the Bush administration first asked for an offensive plan, on October 10 CENTCOM reluctantly proposed an attack that, while aiming at a short left hook around Kuwait, would have committed most coalition forces to frontal attacks against their opponents. Neither Schwarzkopf nor his subordinates believed in this option, whereas Saddam Hussein would have welcomed such an attack, expecting to inflict unacceptable casualties on the coalition.[23]

General Schwarzkopf directed his Special Planning Group, led by then-Lt. Col. Joseph Purgis, to consider different options on the assumption that Third US Army, the army component headquarters of CENTCOM, would have a second corps headquarters with additional mechanized divisions. Purgis's group, including several "Jedi Knight" graduates of the army's School of Advanced

Military Studies, offered the obvious, maneuver-based alternative. In essence, while the I MEF and various Arab forces kept Iraqi forces engaged frontally along the Kuwaiti-Saudi border, the two army corps would swing clockwise three hundred miles (480 km) to the west and north, threatening the supply lines leading into Kuwait and thereby forcing the defenders to withdraw or reorient to the west. Deception plans would depict the intent for a frontal attack northward into Kuwait, supplemented by a USMC amphibious landing on the Kuwaiti coast. To further this deception, the logistical preparation to support the left hook had to be delayed until only a few hours before it was launched.[24] Cross-desert maneuver was enormously facilitated by Global Positioning System (GPS) devices, which were so new that the full constellation of positioning satellites was not yet in orbit and many ground forces lacked GPS receivers. In fact, some American units had to rely on the older system of triangulating their positions using long range navigation (LORAN) radios.

This plan depended on severely attritting the defenders by air attacks, as well as the addition of a second army corps with subordinate troops. Schwarzkopf understandably refused to accept any of the light infantry divisions, thus placing major demands on the army's mechanized forces.[25] Fortuitously, the virtual end of the Cold War permitted the US Army to withdraw almost half of its forces from Europe—the VII Corps—and send them to Saudi Arabia. As eventually configured for the operation, this corps headquarters controlled the UK 1st Armoured Division as well as the US 1st Infantry (Mechanized) and 1st Armored Divisions and 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR). As a further numerical confusion, the 1st Cavalry Division, reduced to two brigades, was the theater reserve but was located in the VII Corps area of operations. West of that corps, XVIII Airborne Corps was to guard the left flank of this flanking maneuver, controlling the 24th Infantry, 82nd Airborne, 101st Air Assault, and French 6th Light Armored Divisions, as well as corps troops such as 3rd ACR.[26]

The movement of a second army corps from Europe to Iraq was another major logistical effort, involving 220,000 more troops and 769,000 tons of equipment.[27] Many of the vehicles arrived after hostilities began. In connection with the strategic deployment of VII Corps, Congress extended the president's mobilization authority for reservists up to 360 days, and the Defense Department mobilized three roundout maneuver brigades and two field artillery brigades from the National Guard. However, as noted before, the former never deployed outside the United States.[28]

Even the "left-hook" maneuver approach to the problem carried significant risks. For planning purposes, CENTCOM estimated that the attack might cost 7,000 Americans killed and a total of 20,000 casualties. When the JCS discussed the plan with Bush on December 1, USAF chief of staff Gen. Merrill

McPeak estimated losing up to 150 aircraft in a month, with one-quarter of the aircrew dead and another quarter captured.[29]

The history of this evolving offensive operation naturally emphasizes the early November decision to redeploy VII Corps and virtually double army troops in theater. It is worth recognizing, however, that all the services underwent a similar augmentation in the three months prior to hostilities. I MEF gained control of a second division, the 2nd Marine, along with large portions of II MEF's air and support components. To reinforce one USMC tank battalion with M1A1 tanks and a USMC Reserve battalion with the older M-60A1 tanks, 2nd Marine Division also received control of the US Army's 1st Brigade, 2nd Armored Division, with two battalions of M1A1s. This attachment required tailored maintenance and supply support for equipment the USMC did not have. The British 1st Armoured Division had originally been slated for this reinforcing role, but the British commander asked that his troops be shifted westward to perform the type of maneuver warfare for which it was trained.[30]

In addition to six attack carrier battle groups in the eastern Mediterranean and western Indian Ocean, part of the USMC air assets were based on amphibious assault ships. Two battleships (USS *Missouri* and *Wisconsin*) and other surface vessels and submarines fired shells or missiles at the Kuwaiti coastline while contributing to the amphibious deception.[31]

The USAF used both the network of Saudi airfields and its worldwide system of bases and refueling tankers to concentrate even more airpower. Eventually, 120 F-15 C/D fighters, 48 F-15E fighter-bombers, 144 A-10 ground attack aircraft, 84 F-111 fighter-bombers, 249 F-16s, 18 EF-111s, and 48 F-4G electronic warfare and air defense suppression aircraft were in theater. Despite the long-range capabilities of its aircraft, the air force still had to preposition large quantities of ordnance at the appropriate bases. The precision-guided munitions alone, which constituted a small but highly expensive minority of all weapons, totaled 7,400 tons.[32] Overall, this phenomenal concentration of force was only possible because the Defense Department was still at its peak just as the Cold War was ending; Moscow announced the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact on February 25, 1991, while Desert Storm was still underway.

Building the Coalition

If the military buildup was slow and perilous, American diplomacy was, by comparison to the glacial pace of most negotiations, remarkably prompt and effective. Secretary of State James Baker flew a total of 100,000 miles in ten weeks to build international support. On November 29, 1990, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 678 to authorize the use of force to expel Iraq from Kuwait; it was the first such authorization since the invasion of

South Korea forty years earlier. In order to gain Soviet support for the resolution, Baker agreed to a forty-five-day delay to allow diplomacy to work, while the resolution euphemistically spoke of "all necessary means" rather than the explicit term "force." The vote was twelve to two, with Cuba and Yemen opposing and China abstaining.[33]

One of the hallmarks of American grand strategy during the Cold War had been building coalitions of allies rather than attempting to fight battles alone. In addition to five Saudi and three Kuwaiti brigades, the Baker State Department lined up one Syrian and two Egyptian divisions, individual divisions from the UK and France, battalions from Morocco and Senegal, and small elements from other states, including some in Eastern Europe. The Syrian and Egyptian contingents had difficulty assembling enough sealift to deploy, while the Saudis quietly funded some of the foreign contingents.[34] The Royal and French air forces also provided significant combat units with smaller elements from the various Arab states. The largely Muslim, Arab contributions were not only useful militarily but, more importantly, supported the American information campaign that this effort was a matter of halting aggression rather than a Christian "Crusader" invasion of Arabia.

Even Japan, with its pacifist constitution, supported the effort by doubling its financial support to the US forces in Japan and allocating the equivalent of $9 billion to support nonmilitary expenditures of the multinational forces. Public opinion deterred the Tokyo government from its initial offer to send five C-130 aircraft to evacuate refugees, but in April 1991, after hostilities had ended, Japan dispatched four minesweepers and two support ships to clean up floating mines in the Persian Gulf.[35] In total, other nations pledged almost $54 billion to defray participant costs in the crisis.[36]

The potential downside of this broad coalition was that it was restricted to the lowest common denominator; that is, it sought only objectives on which all could agree, in a strict interpretation of UNSCR 678—to liberate Kuwait but go no further against Iraq. Virtually everyone could agree that Iraq should leave Kuwait. Few governments, especially Arab states in the Middle East, wanted to create the precedent of foreign forces overthrowing an existing regime. Moreover, the Saudi and Gulf States rulers feared that a power vacuum in Iraq would embolden Iran. Subsequent (and questionable) assertions that the United States should have marched on Baghdad and changed the regime have no basis in political reality.

Given the Bush administration's loathing for the Iraqi dictatorship, it seemed a reasonable assumption that the coalition's liberation of Kuwait would be a sufficient disaster for Baghdad that it would encourage domestic opponents to topple Saddam. After the fact, however, the dictator could easily portray the

survival of his state under (limited) military attack by the world's strongest nation as an actual victory in itself, the "Mother of All Battles." In conjunction with this propaganda pose, Iraq set fire to numerous Kuwaiti oil wells, creating extensive environmental damage.

Washington still had to satisfy both domestic and foreign opinion by making a visible attempt at a diplomatic resolution of the crisis. When Secretary Baker publicly offered to fly to Baghdad, Saddam Hussein said he would only receive Baker on January 12, three days before the UN deadline. Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz finally met Baker in Switzerland on January 9, but he declined even to transmit the American demands to his boss. Saddam regarded such diplomatic gestures as indications of weakness.[37]

Bush and his advisers quietly recognized another drawback to their broad coalition approach: Israel. If Saddam succeeded in goading Tel Aviv into attacking him, it would threaten if not destroy Baker's coalition, because few Muslim Arab states could afford to be on the same side as the Jewish state in any war.

Such were the diplomatic implications of the coalitional approach to the Kuwait problem. There were also less visible issues about integrating and coordinating the military efforts of so many allies. Here, the United States reaped the benefits of decades in which it had conducted exercises in the region and hosted foreign officers in its military schools; for example, the commanders of the Royal Saudi Air Force and overall Saudi defense forces were both graduates of the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base. British and to a lesser extent French forces were also accustomed to American and NATO military procedures and formats. Despite this, American generals had to be diplomats as well as commanders, dealing sensitively with the national caveats and concerns of the many coalition members. This was particularly true of air operations, which unlike ground forces could not be separated by geographic boundaries. On the ground, a Coalition Coordination, Communication, and Integration Center struggled with the myriad of interactions between the allied forces.[38]

Air Planning

Any offensive operation must begin with achieving air superiority and weakening or suppressing the enemy's air defenses. Beyond that, however, CENTAF had to balance CENTCOM's needs for the ground part of the offensive with the emerging air force concepts, based on the works of Giulio Douhet, that precision munitions, stealth technology, and other factors would permit an air force to decapitate and disorganize an enemy state without ground partners.[39] The most articulate advocate of this position was Col. John A. Warden III, who helped draft the Instant Thunder concept forwarded to CENTAF in August. Warden eventually elaborated his basic concept, envisioning an enemy

state as five concentric rings to be targeted, with fielded military forces as the outer, most obvious target, leading inward progressively through population, infrastructure, and organic essentials (such as communications) to the central target: the enemy's command and leadership. Building on the decapitation discussions involved in nuclear warfare theory, Colonel Warden focused on the inner circle as the most decisive point.[40] In the case of Iraq, target planners also had to include weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and surface-to-surface missiles. Given Saddam's success in concealing his WMD program, many such targets were only discovered in the course of the offensive.

The practical implementation of these priorities was the air tasking order (ATO), an extremely detailed description of strike packages, bomb loads, targets, and flight paths, not to mention some nine hundred radio frequencies. A typical ATO ran to two hundred pages in standard message format for attacks during the twenty-four-hour period beginning one minute after midnight. Given the distances from air bases to targets, aerial refueling was as important as strike sorties; 160 tankers were deployed the first night with up to 19,000 refueling sorties during the conflict, most of which had to be included in the ATO. Just transmitting and printing the daily order sometimes required five hours. Even within the USAF, not all headquarters were linked into the Computer Assisted Force Management System, making distribution of the ATO a complex task. Couriers had to deliver physical copies to navy aircraft carriers. In addition to the ATO for the current twenty-four-hour period, this system meant that the Black Hole planners were looking forty-eight hours ahead while the staff officers generating the next ATO focused on the twenty-four hours beyond the current day.[41]

Although CENTAF planned the first days of an operation well in advance, once air strikes actually began, bomb damage assessment (BDA) might force adjustments in subsequent daily ATOs to restrike previous targets. Except in the case of complete destruction, it was often difficult to determine the effects of ordnance on targets. A tank might appear physically intact while having suffered catastrophic damage to suspension, optics, and crew. At the start of hostilities, the BDA process sometimes required several days, causing a delay in decisions about reengaging targets that had previously been struck. BDA improved as the war progressed but was always a subjective process.

Despite such limitations, the ATO permitted the CENTAF commander, Lieutenant General Horner, to make efficient use of available air assets. One partial exception to this centralized control was Joint Task Force Proven Force, a US European Command composite wing operating out of Incirlik Air Base in southern Turkey. For diplomatic reasons, this operation maintained a dual structure, with NATO aircraft conducting defensive aspects while the United

States launched its own offensive operations. Turkish government permission for Proven Force was controversial, with Turkey's defense minister and chief of staff resigning in protest even though the legislature eventually agreed. To avoid complex communications, the CENTAF planners did not include this JTF in the ATO. Instead, Proven Force was assigned specific portions of the Master Attack Plan produced by the Black Hole.[42]

Even with its massive size, the ATO format did not always permit the Black Hole planners to convey their intent to the bombing crews. When attacking the electrical grid, for example, the planners wanted to render the regime temporarily helpless without inflicting long-term damage on Iraqi infrastructure. Therefore, in most instances the desired aim point was a switching station rather than the actual electrical generators. Unaware of this intent, the wings and pilots often aimed at the more obvious generating halls rather than switching stations.[43]

Air Attacks

The Security Council deadline expired at the end of January 15, 1991, and the execution order was issued that day. Allowing for the time zone differences, Operation Desert Storm began slightly more than a day later, at approximately 3:00 a.m. local time on January 17. The first two days of the campaign appeared to be the most dangerous for pilots, because the Iraqi air defense system (KARI, the French transliteration of "Iraq," spelled backward) was still intact. On the first night, USAF MH-53J helicopters guided nine AH-64 attack craft from the 101st Airborne Division to neutralize two early warning radars in southern Iraq; the next day, after the Turkish parliament had approved limited involvement in the conflict, Operation Proven Force eliminated similar radars in the north.[44]

Meanwhile, F-117As engaged high priority targets at night. Iraq's antiaircraft assets, unable to locate any targets, filled the skies over cities with counterfire, probably inflicting casualties on its own people when the shells fell to earth. For heavily defended targets with a high risk of civilian casualties, such as those in downtown Baghdad, the United States used unmanned PGMs. In the first twenty-four hours, seven navy vessels launched 116 Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAMs) while B-52s dropped 35 air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs). Later in the operation, the Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) suppressed Iraqi antiaircraft sites while the US Navy and USMC both dispatched aerial decoys intended to trick the Iraqis into revealing their radars. Ultimately 282 TLAMs and 21 ATACMs were launched.[45]

In addition to air defense radars, command bunkers, and communications, the Iraqi Air Force (IAF) was also a major target of early coalition efforts. Saddam had apparently planned to hunker down and conserve his planes, and

in fact Iraq lost only sixteen aircraft in air-to-air combat during the first nine days of hostilities. Coalition air attacks denied the IAF the option of waiting, however. At considerable cost to themselves, RAF pilots dropped specialized submunitions to crater Iraqi airfields, while USAF 2,000-pound laser-guided bombs easily shattered at least 375 of Iraq's 594 "bombproof" aircraft shelters. This technological surprise prompted the IAF to conduct a mass exodus to Iran on January 26–28. One should also note that sixteen out of thirty-three IAF aircraft destroyed in air-to-air combat were engaged beyond visual range, making identification of friend or foe critical.[46]

Prior to the start of hostilities, coalition air forces had five months to prepare for war, operating from superb (if crowded) airfields in good weather with almost unlimited fuel for training. Once the offensive began, however, the worst winter weather in nineteen years included fog and clouds that interfered with laser-guided bombs. The same overcast conditions added further delays in acquiring as well as interpreting poststrike imagery for BDA. Moreover, the early loss of several Tornado and A-10 aircraft prompted the coalition to restrict their use to more shallow targets. Similarly, two F-16s were lost on January 19, temporarily ending the use of this aircraft in daylight over Baghdad. To avoid antiaircraft fire from the surface, cautious planners restricted many aircraft to a hard "floor" of 10,000 feet altitude that hampered engagement of tactical ground equipment, especially that of the Republican Guard divisions that were not near the front lines. Ground tactical commanders expressed frustration that their nomination of ground targets seemed to have no effect on the ATO, although some of this apparent disconnect was due to General Schwarzkopf approving bombing priorities proposed by CENTAF.[47]

As previously noted, various difficulties such as lack of doctrine and poor weather hampered the conduct of BDA analysis. Because the armed services had retired most of their aerial reconnaissance aircraft, such as the RF-4 and SR-71, it was difficult to obtain simultaneous coverage of large areas in order to locate and count enemy weapons. Much of the photo reconnaissance work fell to navy F-14s equipped with the Tactical Airborne Reconnaissance Pod System (TARPS).[48] The amount of equipment destroyed was counted inaccurately when expressed as a percentage of the theoretical full strengths of Iraqi units. Moreover, pilot assessments of the effects of air strikes have traditionally proved exaggerated because pilots have only a fleeting view of their targets and might not realize that the destruction they witnessed was caused by another weapon. The Central Command Army component (ARCENT) G-2 section decided to accept 75 percent of what A-10 pilots described as destroyed, whereas DIA analysts, without access to such reports, based their BDA strictly on national-level imagery.[49]

All these factors contributed to two different assessments, with national-level agencies generally estimating lower levels of destruction than did ARCENT and CENTAF. To minimize these differences, DIA's twice-daily intelligence estimates explicitly quoted CENTCOM's figures rather than its own, but the issue leaked to the press in early February. There was even an unfounded rumor that the lower national estimates were intended to avoid responsibility if/when the CENTCOM ground offensive failed.[50] In fact, however, the two sets of figures were simply products of different subjective processes, and over time the total numbers in the two estimates gradually converged.

Saddam Hussein frequently courted domestic and foreign support by posing as an enemy of Israel. During Desert Storm, he sought to bait Tel Aviv into entering the conflict as a means of disrupting the US-led international coalition. Few, if any, Arab or Muslim governments could afford to appear as allies of the Jewish state.

Saddam's chosen instrument for this baiting was the Scud surface-to-surface ballistic missile. During the Iran-Iraq War, Iraq had launched 361 missiles as terror weapons, killing at least 2,000 Iranian civilians. Because the Soviet-designed Scud-B's 300 km range was insufficient to hit Tehran and other Iranian cities, Iraq had developed several modifications, reducing the warhead size and weight. The most prominent such modifications were the al-Hussein (with a reported range up to 640 km) and the al-Abbas (800+ km) missiles. Prior to the conflict, Saddam had erected a number of fixed launching facilities for these missiles in western Iraq. Although coalition air strikes promptly hit these facilities, there were also several dozen modified MAZ 543 transporter-erector-launcher (TEL) vehicles for mobile use.[51] Crews dispersed these TELs as well as Scud components and fuel supplies out of their bases several days prior to the coalition attack, thus increasing their survival rates. Western intelligence agencies assessed that these modified Scuds could carry chemical or biological weapons, but only high explosive was used in 1991.

At least forty-two missiles landed in or near Israel, with another forty-six targeting the Gulf region countries. The first group of missiles came very close to causing Israel to respond against Iraq, and the United States invested considerable resources to avert this intervention. In addition to deploying US-manned Patriot air defense batteries to Israel, British and American special operations units combed western Iraq while CENTAF diverted significant numbers of reconnaissance and strike sorties in an effort to locate and neutralize the TELs. Some of these aircraft scattered aerial mines on likely launching areas.

Prior to hostilities, many observers had assumed that Iraqi missile crews would follow the elaborate Soviet-designed procedures, including launching of weather balloons and other time-consuming steps, thereby increasing the

possibility of detection and neutralization before launch. Instead, the Iraqis proved very adept at setting up, launching, and then evacuating presurveyed positions in a matter of minutes. (Such haste ensured that the missiles were even more inaccurate than the original Soviet design, which had a circular error probable [CEP] of 450 meters. The al-Hussein and al-Abbas had CEPs of approximately 1,000 and 1,500 meters, respectively.[52]) In the frantic search for these elusive weapons, coalition pilots understandably misidentified some gasoline tanker trucks, with their long, curved tank structure, as TELs. In one tragic incident, a group of tanker trucks, hauling oil to Jordan, were parked at a rest stop on a highway in western Iraq. Seeing these trucks, one pilot believed he had located half a dozen missile launchers parked side by side, at a time when the Iraqis had dispersed individual TELs widely. The ensuing attacks killed at least four Jordanian drivers and destroyed nine trucks.[53]

Despite all these efforts, there is no conclusive proof that the coalition destroyed even a single Scud missile or TEL on the ground. The most that can be said definitively is that the constant threat posed by coalition patrols forced the Iraqis to take precautions, reducing the number of launches as the war went on. More than 80 percent of missile launches took place at night, making target acquisition almost impossible.[54]

Instead, the defense against these ballistic missiles fell primarily to the US Army Patriot air defense system (the term "Patriot" is an acronym for Phased Array Tracking Radar to Intercept On Target). Originally designed as an antiaircraft weapon, in 1990 the Patriot system had only just been redesigned (MIM-104 C or PAC-2) to provide limited capacity against ballistic missiles. As a result, the 11th Air Defense Brigade deployed batteries in the northern Gulf region, while US Army Europe's 32nd Army Air Defense Command furnished batteries in Israel and Turkey. When four batteries proved inadequate to shield Israel, two additional US batteries and one Dutch battery were flown in.

These batteries did a remarkable job of interception, achieving the overall diplomatic goal of keeping Israel neutral during Desert Storm. That said, the PAC-2 Patriot faced two significant challenges. First, the Iraqi-modified Scuds were so fragile that a Patriot might intercept a missile successfully and yet the warhead might break free and continue on its trajectory to impact. Indeed, a successful intercept often produced a "bloom" of missile fragments, complicating the Patriot system's task of sorting threat versus harmless objects.[55] Second, the original computer system for the Patriot had insufficient capacity to handle the complex calculations involved in a high-speed missile intercept, resulting in dangerous errors. The revised software slightly rounded off or truncated the actual elapsed time record of an intercept. During Desert Storm, when a single battery operated continuously for one hundred hours, it accumulated a timing

lag of 0.3433 seconds. On February 25, this miniscule accumulated lag created an error in the system's range gate that determined the elapsed time of flight for a target. As a result, a system covering Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, misinterpreted a genuine al-Hussein missile as an error signal and did not target it.[56] The missile struck a barracks filled with American troops, killing twenty-eight and wounding ninety-nine. This was the only fully successful Iraqi missile attack, which despite the casualties had no effect on the larger war. American diplomats not only kept Israel neutral, but they persuaded the Saudi government not to launch its own inaccurate missiles at Baghdad in retaliation.[57]

A related success was the ad hoc development of a warning system for missile launches despite the brief time of flight involved. In a matter of days, the United States cobbled together Defense Support Program (DSP) satellites and communications to alert both Patriots and target areas.[58]

Air Effects

Coalition air attacks had a profound but not fatal effect on the Iraqi regime. Saddam and the Ba'athists retained control of the country, although their power over the populace was somewhat degraded.[59] Iraqi radio and television broadcasts were interrupted periodically. In Kuwait, both resupply and tactical command and control were impaired, making it difficult for Iraqi commanders to transmit detailed orders.[60] The conscript infantry formations, disproportionately manned with Shi'a and Kurds who had little love for the regime, had limited combat power even before the air attacks. Those air strikes, in concert with poor resupply, undoubtedly helped depress the already low morale of such units, although few desertions occurred prior to the start of ground operations. One RAND researcher who interviewed many Iraqi prisoners of war concluded that there was at best a limited correlation between the intensity of air attacks and a unit's willingness to fight. By contrast, the Iraqi army's mechanized and armored divisions and especially the Republican Guard retained their morale and courage even after they suffered significant losses due to airpower.[61]

Although pilots resorted to "plinking" individual enemy tanks with PGMs, the dispersed and fortified Iraqi defenders posed a particularly difficult target for airpower. The one abortive Iraqi offensive action offered much more lucrative targets.

Unable to respond effectively to the air offensive, Saddam Hussein sought to create an opportunity to inflict casualties, which he regarded as the key to defeating American will. On the evening of January 29, the Iraqi III Corps used elements of three different heavy divisions to attack across the Kuwaiti-Saudi border toward the coastal towns of Khafji and Mis'hab.

The plan was for Iraq's 1st Mechanized Division to protect the western flank of this incursion while 3rd Armored Division advanced in the center and 5th Mechanized Division moved down the coastline to Khafji. Each division sent only a battalion task force forward, apparently expecting to provoke a coalition response that they would draw northward into a killing zone. At the same time, fifteen small vessels would transport commandos along the Gulf coastline to land in the rear and cause confusion.[62]

Unbeknownst to the Iraqis, the Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) identified Iraqi vehicle movements in the nights before the attack. The US Air Force and US Army had developed the experimental JSTARS, mounted in a modified Boeing 707 designated E-8C, to detect movement of second echelon Soviet forces in the event of a European conflict. It provided excellent imagery of the advancing Iraqi columns. Unfortunately for the coalition, however, the attention of senior commanders was focused on the Scud launching areas of western Iraq, which meant that JSTARS time was devoted more to that region than to northeastern Saudi Arabia.

Not only A-10s but AC-130 gunships and various Marine Corps aircraft responded promptly to close air support requests from the Khafji area; one AC-130 fell victim to an Iraqi surface-to-air missile. US and Royal Navy aircraft dispersed the commando vessels before they ever reached their objectives. Unfortunately, the CENTAF Tactical Air Control Center (TACC) remained focused on executing its existing ATO and for almost four hours failed to recognize the opportunity posed by the Iraqi advance. Once General Horner intervened personally—apparently at the behest of the Saudis—the TACC redirected aircraft and inflicted significant casualties on the attackers. These massed armored vehicles were much more vulnerable to air attack than they had been while dispersed in defensive positions.[63]

As part of his vain efforts to court the Bush administration, Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev had supported US diplomatic efforts to liberate Kuwait while maneuvering to evacuate Russian nationals from the region. As the air attacks continued, however, Soviet hard-liners, including senior commanders, objected to the spectacle of the United States defeating the Moscow-friendly regime in Baghdad. By mid-February, Gorbachev was urging Iraq to speed up its withdrawal and cut its losses, but the Iraqis still tried to obtain concessions for their withdrawal.[64]

The Ground Offensive

After six weeks of air action, Schwarzkopf as theater commander concluded that his opponents were sufficiently weakened to launch the ground offensive. As the theater reserve, the two-brigade 1st Cavalry Division conducted

demonstrations as if it were attacking along the southwestern border of Kuwait. Small raids on Iraqi-held islands as well as naval and marine demonstrations sought to keep enemy focus on the eastern end of the line of contact while an endless stream of vehicle convoys shifted the two corps of Third Army/ARCENT westward over primitive roads to their jumping-off positions. Even I MEF had to move its troops and logistics westward to a new attack area, leaving the coastline to the Gulf States troops of Joint Forces Command–East. Fortunately for the attackers, Iraqi tactical intelligence was so inadequate that it had little knowledge of these coalition movements until the attacks began.

On February 24, the first day of ground action (G-Day), two battleships shelled the Kuwaiti coastline to support JFC-East, while I MEF cleared twenty lanes through defensive minefields and advanced twenty miles at the "elbow" of the Kuwaiti-Saudi border. This progress was so rapid that General Schwarzkopf decided to advance the overall timetable of the offensive. Unfortunately for his intent, the largely Egyptian JFC-North was slow to respond. By one account, Schwarzkopf had to appeal to the Cairo government to compel the 3rd Egyptian Mechanized Division to advance, belatedly, on the afternoon of February 24. Meeting only limited resistance, this division halted short of its initial objectives, which it only reached two days later. Elsewhere, although the Iraqi infantry defended against frontal attacks, it surrendered quickly when the coalition outflanked its positions.[65] This success was so unexpected that Schwarzkopf ordered Third Army to accelerate the main offensive to the afternoon of February 24.

On the far left, XVIII Airborne Corps had to move rapidly to guard the expanding open left flank of the overall wheel toward the northeast. The French 6th Light Armored Division, with operational control of a brigade of the 82nd Airborne, was on the extreme left, while the 101st Air Assault Division used its superior mobility to leapfrog forward by helicopter, creating various supply bases en route. The 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), on the eastern inside of the corps's wheeling movement, made rapid progress across empty desert.

VII Corps had to move more cautiously, with its divisions within mutually supporting range of each other, in anticipation of encountering the Republican Guard heavy divisions. Commanders were also concerned about the risks of fratricide during the first night, especially between a 2nd Armored Division brigade, a European-based unit, and the rest of 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized) to which it was attached. Bad weather particularly hampered the movement of the UK 1st Armoured Division as it passed through 1st Infantry Division, which had made the initial breech, and began the exploitation. General Schwarzkopf, who had expected faster progress by VII Corps, became increasingly impatient about what he perceived to be foot-dragging on the part

of Third Army and especially VII Corps. Misunderstandings between headquarters staffs further complicated the situation.[66]

Despite the damage caused by air attacks, the Iraqi military responded to the dual threats on its southern and western flanks. Late on February 24, some six hours after the Third Army offensive began, two brigades of the Iraqi 12th Armored Division, located on the northern Kuwaiti border in second echelon, began to move westward to counter the left hook. The next day, two other mechanized brigades took advantage of cover from the smoke of burning oil wells in an attempt to counterattack the flanks of the I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) advance, but the marines promptly shattered these units.[67] Just as at Khafji, the Iraqi effort to maneuver mechanized units against the coalition only served to offer better targets for air strikes.

In contrast to the "cannon fodder" infantry units in Kuwait, the armored and mechanized divisions of the regular Iraqi army, as well as all the divisions of the Republican Guard, were disciplined and brave; they continued to fight even after they suffered significant losses. Yet, they were no match for American, British, and French professional soldiers. Not only were the Iraqi weapons worn out and technically inferior to their opponents', but the troops themselves lacked the training—and perhaps the independent initiative—to fight their Western counterparts in high-intensity maneuver warfare. The Iraqi navy found itself similarly outclassed. By the time Iraqi and coalition commanders met at Safwan to arrange a ceasefire, the former had lost situational awareness of the battlefield. During the meeting, Iraqi generals were visibly surprised to learn how many of their troops had surrendered and how much territory the coalition had seized.[68]

Winning the War but Not the Peace

After this brilliant exhibition of tactical and operational competence, the United States and its coalition partners failed at the strategic level. From August 1990 onward, Schwarzkopf and the US ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Charles W. Freeman, had repeatedly asked their respective departments for guidance on national objectives and war termination. In January, on the eve of war, Freeman consulted with Schwarzkopf and then cabled a list of proposed objectives, including liberation of Kuwait and the reduction of both the Republican Guard and Iraqi weapons of mass destruction to limit the future threat posed by Iraq while still maintaining some counterweight to Iran. This cable received no response, and overall Schwarzkopf elicited only one minor change in wording for his proposed instructions. Some combination of two factors was at work: the widespread belief that Saddam's regime would soon collapse and the carefully nurtured belief, born in reaction to Vietnam, that the military should be free

to make decisions in the field. The result, however, was that Schwarzkopf had little political guidance in making peace with Iraq. As Freeman lamented later, "Saddam's military disgrace never translated into a political humiliation."[69]

The meeting at Safwan Airfield on March 3 reflected this lack of guidance. Schwarzkopf told the Iraqi generals that any agreement was contingent on their country's acceptance of UNSCR 686, passed the previous day, which required Iraq to rescind its annexation of Kuwait, pay reparations, free prisoners and hostages, provide minefield maps, and the like. Foreign Minister Aziz promptly cabled a letter to the UN agreeing that Iraq would fulfill its obligations under 686, although in the long run Iraq evaded many of its provisions.[70]

Beyond that minimal set of political goals, the Safwan agreement was too generous. Schwarzkopf was understandably concerned with immediate issues such as recovery of prisoners and avoidance of further firefights. In an effort to reassure his opposite numbers, he pledged that no coalition soldiers would remain inside Iraq. He also asserted a no-fly zone in southern Iraq, but the Iraqis, citing the number of bridges that had been destroyed, asked for an exception for helicopters, implying that this would be only for command and control. This loophole later allowed Iraq to use helicopter gunships to repress the Shi'a uprising in the south.[71]

Iraq was able to rebuild from the wreckage of Desert Storm. Saddam presented himself as a hero who had led his country to a remarkable victory, surviving intact despite devastating attacks by the world's only remaining superpower and its allies. With considerable difficulty, he suppressed Shi'a rebellions in the south and Kurdish aspirations in the north, while the United States did not intervene. Then he began a determined effort to impede and evade UN efforts to bring Iraq into compliance with international norms on WMD (see chapter 6).

Meanwhile, the United States followed its historical pattern of trying to put a war behind it as soon as possible, regardless of the situation on the ground. Most Americans both in and out of uniform were eager to bring the huge deployment to an end. While it was relatively simple to move the troops out, they left behind acres of expensive military hardware and supplies. The US Army alone had to evacuate 129,000 vehicles, 2,000 helicopters, and 41,000 shipping containers of supplies. Lt. Gen. William Pagonis dubbed this redeployment "Desert Farewell," an effort that lasted for almost a year after the end of hostilities.[72] Only a few American elements, primarily air units associated with the Southern Watch No Fly Zone, remained in Saudi Arabia, yet the presence of even these small forces offended Islamic fundamentalists. The Saudi government itself, dismayed by the enormous expense of the war, was unlikely to risk a repetition of Western occupancy.

Cairo, in particular, had hoped to gain status from its participation in Desert Storm. In March 1991, the regional states signed a Damascus Accord, which pledged to create a 100,000-man security force drawn from Syria, Egypt, and the Gulf States, but that force never came to pass. A combination of historical wariness about Egyptian expansionism and the disappointing performance of the Joint Forces Command–North meant that the Saudis hurried the Egyptian departure from the peninsula. The Gulf States appeared to prefer relying on an over-the-horizon American deterrent, and Kuwait did not even give Egypt significant building contracts for its reconstruction effort.[73]

Consequences

Desert Storm again demonstrated the dominance—approaching supremacy—of Western armed forces in conventional warfare. The Cold War all-volunteer American military, nourished with such effort and expense during the 1970s and 1980s, had proved its worth just before being downsized rapidly, as will be described in chapter 3.

Yet, different observers drew different conclusions from this dominance. In conjunction with other military events beginning with the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas conflict and extending into the Balkan struggles of the 1990s, Desert Storm was a key event that prompted China to abandon its Maoist mass armies and begin to develop better training and weaponry. When Jiang Zemin became president in 1993, he increased defense budgets to give the People's Liberation Army greater capability in high-technology warfare.[74]

Iraq's defeat encouraged North Korea and Iran to redouble their nuclear development in hopes of deterring the United States from similar operations against them. For the various nonstate actors, especially but not exclusively Islamic fundamentalist groups, the ability of the United States to destroy the fourth-largest army in the world reinforced a belief that only terrorism and unconventional warfare, such as that used against the Soviets in Afghanistan or against the Israelis in Lebanon, would serve their goals in the future.

Closely related to this conclusion was the perception that open aggression, like that of Iraq invading Kuwait, was a throwback to the 1930s that attracted massive international resistance. After 1991, aggressors often turned to more ambiguous methods, conducting operations in a manner that sought to avoid triggering such an overwhelming response. This type of attack, which David Kilcullen has dubbed "liminal warfare," expands the repertoire of tactics to include operations on the fuzzy edge of conventional warfare, such as the Russian seizure of Crimea in 2014 or the expanded regional role of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The Russians in particular turned to such methodologies, including cyber warfare, that could achieve decisive results before

the Western democracies could generate sufficient public support to clearly attribute an operation to Russian government aggression (see chapter 12).[75] When Moscow departed from the "gray area" of ambiguous operations to resume open aggression against Ukraine, it encountered severe—and apparently unanticipated—opposition.

For the US government, there was a disconnect between reality and perception about precision-guided munitions. First, no weapon is absolutely accurate; in 1991, pilots launched at least two and up to eight laser-guided bombs at a given target. Add to this the fact that, for valid reasons such as weather, navigation, and maintenance, even the F-117As actually dropped weapons on only 75 percent of scheduled missions, and those weapons had an accuracy of less than 90 percent. TLAMs, by contrast, could be launched in any weather, but a significant (if classified) number of such missiles were lost en route due to defensive fire or navigational errors.[76] While all these weapons had unprecedented accuracy, the official Defense Department report to Congress on the conflict conceded that "not every PGM hit its intended target."[77]

Despite this reality, airpower triumphed if only in public perceptions. Although 89.6 percent of the ordnance dropped during Desert Storm consisted of conventional "dumb" bombs,[78] both policymakers and the public focused on the incredible accuracy of PGMs, whether cruise missiles or laser-guided bombs. Carefully selected targeting videos were released to the press, showing PGMs that appeared to hit and destroy their targets every time. These films gave the illusion that coalition pilots were playing a complicated video game that destroyed objects—hangers, tanks, guns, and so on—without any visible friendly, civilian, or even enemy casualties. In a press briefing, General Schwarzkopf labeled one famous example of this as "the luckiest man in Iraq"—an Iraqi automobile drove across a bridge just before a precision weapon destroyed that bridge, leaving the driver apparently unscathed—yet the tape stopped before the full effects of the blast were visible.[79] By contrast, news footage of Iraqi antiaircraft guns firing blindly into the sky over Baghdad convinced many viewers that cruise missiles and stealth-technology aircraft were invulnerable.

Colonel Warden was not alone in asserting that airpower had won the conflict and predicting a future in which the United States would use PGMs to achieve its policy goals with little risk or expense.[80] Regardless of who won the war in reality, the US Air Force and likeminded airpower advocates clearly conquered public perceptions.

Political leaders grasped the concepts of airpower and PGMs as a way to take rapid, vigorous action with minimum risk of friendly losses. Given the human and political costs of prolonged ground operations for relatively minor

policy objectives, precision airpower appeared to be a perfect policy solution. The new tool allowed the decision-maker numerous options—from a single unmanned aerial vehicle strike to a sustained aerial bombardment—that gave the *appearance* of robust action while minimizing friendly and civilian casualties and leaving the government free to withdraw without losing face or blood. For the remainder of the decade, TLAMs became the equivalent of diplomatic protest notes to register American disapproval.

As an added benefit, press images of such air strikes in remote areas were much rarer than photographs from ground conflicts. Yet, the perception of bloodlessness produced impossibly high public expectations of perfect accuracy and minimal civilian casualties.[81] Although morally admirable, public expectations of zero "collateral damage" eventually placed severe limitations on the value of Western airpower. Since at least 1942, armies have engaged in "hugging tactics," staying so close to their opponents that those opponents hesitate to use air and artillery strikes for fear of friendly casualties. In the twenty-first century, unconventional adversaries increasingly embedded themselves among the civilian populace, especially in urban areas and religious buildings, thereby evading Western air attacks for fear of collateral civilian casualties. Such cynical tactics went a considerable way toward neutralizing the air supremacy of 1991.[82]

CHAPTER 3

The Incredible Shrinking Superpowers

Grozny, December 31, 1994

The mountainous region of Chechnya, on the southern flank of the Russian Federation, was again struggling for its freedom from Russia, in part because of a resurgence of both nationalism and Islamic belief after decades of repression by the Soviet Union. Unfortunately for the Chechens, their republic contained a vital concentration of oil wells, refineries, and pipelines that produced, among other commodities, 90 percent of the aviation fuel in the USSR.[1] Chechen petroleum had been strategically important for decades, having been the intended goal of the 1942 German offensive south of Stalingrad. Dzhokar Dudayev, the former Soviet air force officer who tried to make Chechnya independent, chose to encourage the traditional Islamist resistance of the Caucasus region. This led to an influx of jihadist veterans of the Afghan-Soviet struggle, as well as weapons and drug smugglers. Such radical Islamists only fanned the traditional, nationalist resistance of local nationalities against control by Moscow.[2] In 1994, after a prolonged, indecisive struggle, the Russians sent in three brigade-sized columns in an effort to seize the capital city, Grozny, on New Year's Eve.

The Russian forces were in no condition to conduct combat operations. After years of budgetary starvation and poor recruiting, the remnants of the Soviet Army were cannibalized to form the three columns. Even individual tank crew members were strangers to each other, and the ad hoc units lacked training and cohesion. Rather than the kind of precise targeting exhibited by Western powers in Desert Storm, the Russian air force bombed the city almost at random, apparently trying to terrorize the inhabitants, in the same manner it would use decades later against Ukraine. Two of the three column commanders, hampered by poor supplies and communications, reported

imaginary advances while leaving the third column to attack alone. That column, built around the 131st Motorized Rifle Brigade, lost 20 out of 26 tanks and 102 out of 120 infantry fighting vehicles in a single night of chaotic struggle. The Chechens used cellular telephones and Soviet-era rocket propelled grenades, firing from rooftops at the Russian vehicles penned in the narrow streets below. The defenders achieved a tactical victory that their leaders then exploited in propaganda to further demoralize the Russians.[3]

Two years later, Russian forces withdrew from the rebel province in defeat, only to reengage in Chechnya in 1999. The Grozny battle represented both a nadir for Russian military power and a symbol for the 1990s, a decade when most governments sharply reduced the size of their conventional forces only to encounter growing unconventional and terrorist tactics.

The Passing of the Red Army

The Vietnam conflict and the ensuing end to peacetime conscription had placed enormous internal stresses on the American military. Despite considerable problems of recruitment, racial equity, substance abuse, and indiscipline, the US armed forces had emerged in the 1980s as a new and more professional all-volunteer force. A decade later, the Soviet armed forces experienced even greater stresses as they not only lost their conscript base but were torn apart by the dissolution of their state. Within the USSR, the war in Afghanistan encouraged a growing rejection of military service with an accompanying loss of status for career officers. While American forces achieved rapid battlefield results in Panama and Kuwait, their former adversaries entered a decade of scarcity and helplessness.

As general secretary from 1985 through 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev tried to reform the Soviet economy and polity without abandoning the Marxist premise of the socialist state, a virtual contradiction in terms. Indeed, heading the Communist Party of the Soviet Union constrained any incumbent in dealing with the inertia of the existing order. When the subject peoples on the fringes of the USSR became increasingly vocal about independence, Gorbachev tried to hold the empire together, vastly underestimating the pull of ethnic nationalism and religion. He and his advisers, steeped in Marxism, resisted a faster introduction of the market economy at a time when such changes were necessary for survival.[4]

Interior Ministry (MVD) paramilitary troops proved incapable of controlling ethnically based protests, so the general secretary turned increasingly to the Soviet Army to restore order. In December 1987, motorized rifle troops repressed student ethnic protests in Alma Ata (now Almaty), Kazakhstan, rounding up leaders, two of whom were later executed by court order.[5] As

unrest increased, a few elite MVD units plus the more disciplined paratroopers of the Soviet Army found themselves the instruments of choice in increasingly violent incidents. In late 1987, the ethnically Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh sought autonomy from the surrounding Muslims of Azerbaijan. In February 1988, this produced a backlash in the form of an anti-Armenian pogrom in a suburb of the Azerbaijani capital of Baku. The 137th Guards Airborne Regiment arrived from Moscow and reimposed order at a cost of six Azeris dead.[6]

Controlling proindependence demonstrations in Tbilisi, Georgia, during April 1989 was again beyond the capacity of local MVD forces. The first army regiment to deploy was the 345th Airborne, which had recently withdrawn from Afghanistan only to be parked with few resources in the unstable Abkhazia region of northwestern Georgia. The commander of the Trans-Caucasus Military District apparently believed that Georgian party officials wanted strong action against the demonstrators, although he paid lip service to the idea of minimal force. When the 345th arrived in Tbilisi, the hardened paratroopers remained calm in the face of rocks and insults, but their advance produced a stampede of demonstrators that killed at least eighteen. Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders allowed the army to take the blame for these losses, producing a "Tbilisi syndrome" in which soldiers were reluctant to use force against Soviet citizens.[7] While the Army continued to repress disorders on the periphery, this syndrome contributed to the hesitations and failure in the attempted coup against Gorbachev on August 19–21, 1991.

As the USSR approached its deathbed, ethnic resistance also expressed itself in terms of refusal to report for conscript service in the military. Ethnic minorities suffered even more than Great Russians from the savage beatings—and occasional deaths—administered by conscripts who were in their final six months of service on those who had just reported. This bullying system of Dedovshchina (reign of grandfathers) undermined the formal chain of command and demoralized the troops. Beginning with the spring call-up of 1989, therefore, up to 90 percent of draftees in the Baltic republics, as well as in Georgia and Armenia, failed to report for service. By the spring of 1991, two years later, even the Moscow Military District had 50 percent draft evasion, while the peripheral republics were almost totally resistant. Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov admitted that the military was short 353,000 conscripts by June of that year.[8]

The officer corps suffered under the circumstances. Being an officer in any army is challenging, and that was especially true in the Soviet system, which had almost no career NCOs to help in leadership and management. Long hours and poor pay were now exacerbated by a loss of status in a Soviet society that

perceived the armed forces as ineffective in Afghanistan and repressive in the Soviet republics. Given the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe, shortages of quarters for officers and their families increased, with the number of officers without housing growing from 13,000 in 1981 to 128,000 in 1990. Discontent grew at precisely the time when Gorbachev's policy of glasnost (openness) lifted the veil over the poor living conditions of soldiers.[9]

Strapped for cash, the Gorbachev government tried to reduce the number of ground units and shrink defense budgets across the board. In 1989, the Soviet navy's already shaky readiness declined rapidly, with one submarine sinking off the Norwegian coast and three other vessels suffering serious accidents at sea. Food shortages prompted the soldiers of one Strategic Rocket Forces unit in the Ural Mountains to threaten abandoning their posts.[10]

The failed coup of August 1991 irretrievably shifted legitimacy from Gorbachev's Soviet regime to the Russian Federation of Boris Yeltsin, leading on December 21 to the Alma Ata agreement that phased out the USSR in favor of a loose Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Most of the armed forces broke up into their constituent national elements, with the airborne troops intervening a final time in 1992 to rescue a former Soviet motorized rifle regiment marooned in the middle of the Nagorno-Karabakh civil war.

As the last Soviet defense minister (1991–92) and then the commander of CIS joint armed forces (1992–93), Marshal of Aviation Yevgeny Shaposhnikov tried to hold the Strategic Rocket Forces and other central elements together.[11] In the process, though, Shaposhnikov and other senior officers intruded into political decisions. Shaposhnikov wanted voting status on the Collective Security Council of CIS heads of government, while other generals refused to abide by the limited budgets approved by the various republics of the CIS. For a period of time, Moscow backed Shaposhnikov and the CIS joint forces because Yeltsin expected to control them. In 1992, however, Yeltsin concluded that the situation was unworkable, so he followed the other republics in creating separate national armed forces and gradually eliminating political activism by the generals.[12]

Intertwined with the decline and division of the Soviet armed forces was the question of controlling nuclear weapons. During the August 1991 coup, communications to Gorbachev's Cheget console, the Soviet equivalent of the US "nuclear football," were cut off. Meanwhile, Defense Minister Dmitry Yazov or his chief of staff apparently used other Chegets to alert Soviet nuclear forces as a warning to the West. Ballistic missile submarines in Soviet ports prepared to launch from the surface, while some nuclear weapons were uploaded onto aircraft. This temporary loss of civilian control, together with a more general concern about Soviet oversight of nuclear weapons, prompted President

George H. W. Bush to propose a number of measures intended to consolidate weapons, including withdrawing most nuclear warheads from the peripheral republics into Russia. Numerous tactical weapons were moved at the time, but when the USSR dissolved at the end of the year, three former republics besides Russia—Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan—still had strategic missile launchers on their territories. After initially announcing their intention to denuclearize, in the spring of 1992 these three governments all made diplomatic gestures indicating that they wanted security guarantees before they would give up their weapons. In Ukraine, at least, the officers of the 43rd Strategic Rocket Forces Army acknowledged Kyiv's control by the end of April, although it was not clear whether the Ukrainian government actually had the launch codes for ICBMs or the targeting information for nuclear-tipped cruise missiles. Fortunately for world stability, the Bush administration insisted that the new states abide by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but again control over these weapons was in doubt for much of 1992.[13] In 2022, the Ukrainian government discovered that the security guarantees it had received in return for surrendering these missiles were virtually worthless.

Russia under Yeltsin

For a brief period in the 1990s, the Yeltsin regime seemed to promise Russia an escape from its tradition as a Eurasian authoritarian empire. The United States and other Western states made gestures of inclusion, but within a few years the Russians, heavily influenced by what they perceived to be unfair Western interference in the Balkans, began to revert to their fear of Western domination while Washington opposed any Russian interference in its neighboring states and seemed to give Russian concerns no consideration. Several newly independent republics of the former Soviet Union eagerly sought membership in the European Union; although there was no formal requirement to join NATO, as a practical matter most EU candidates first joined the alliance. This trend culminated in 2004, when Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, along with former Soviet satellites Romania and Bulgaria, became full members of NATO. Misled by their own Cold War propaganda, most Russians regarded NATO as an aggressive anti-Russian alliance rather than a collective defense mechanism. They believed that the West had promised not to expand NATO and were therefore alarmed when the alliance expanded to the borders of the new federation and conducted air operations in former Yugoslavia.

Moreover, during the 1990s American policy experts such as Strobe Talbot sought independent access to the potential oil resources of the Caspian Sea region, in part as a means to offset Iranian threats to disrupt petroleum production in the Persian Gulf. In the next decade, construction projects

such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline attempted to connect this oil to the Black Sea outside of Russian control. Then-president George W. Bush and his vice president, Richard Cheney, again demanded that Russia not interfere in the Trans-Caucasus region, further increasing Moscow's sense of insult and encirclement.[14]

Despite the tendency to blame the West for all its woes, the underlying issue in the post-Soviet period was the economy. After seven decades of centrally directed production in which defense needs took first priority, Russian industry blundered through a poorly planned and implemented attempt at privatization. In addition to massive corruption, this conversion failed in large measure because government leaders had no understanding of or faith in a market economy. The economic chaos forced Yeltsin to reduce military strength and budgets. In 1996, the budget shortfall was 25 trillion roubles and the government owed the average officer almost 10,000 roubles in back pay.[15] Defense industries lost their domestic market and struggled to find buyers overseas, while the Russian security forces were left with increasingly obsolescent weaponry. Employment by Russian weapons manufacturers declined from 8.27 million in 1990 to 2.04 million by 2001, although defense remained the largest sector of Russian research and development.[16] Yet, many in the Russian national security structure continued to insist on maintaining their capability for industrial mobilization in the Stalinist tradition. To justify this goal, such leaders encouraged anti-Western and antiforeign attitudes.[17]

In August 1998, a financial meltdown forced Russia to devalue the rouble. In return for granting loans to Moscow, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) required significant restructuring of the economy, a normal IMF procedure that many governments found insulting. Although such requirements are customary when dealing with the IMF, Russian public opinion regarded them as a national humiliation, another instance of Western dominance over the country.[18] Five years later, the Russian government finally began to reinvest in defense using lucrative premiums collected from petroleum production, but the oil market was subject to fluctuations that sometimes produced wide swings in the Russian national budget and economy.[19]

These budgetary woes placed great stress on Russian civil-military relations. Military leaders had accepted Yeltsin's 1992 model of the army as a presidential institution, so that the army supported the Russian president in his September–October 1993 confrontation with the Russian legislature. The speaker of the Russian Parliament, Ruslan Khasbulatov, led a group of hard-liners who preferred order and authority to democracy; they defied Yeltsin's order to dissolve it and hold new elections. This time, in contrast to the failed 1991 coup when Soviet troops had hesitated to act, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev followed

Yeltsin's orders to fire upon and seize the "White House," where the legislators had barricaded themselves.[20]

Yeltsin rewarded this military loyalty poorly with continued budget cuts and a half-hearted commitment of troops to repress the independence movement in Chechnya. That struggle attracted attention and support from a variety of Islamist and other causes, to the point where the Caucasus region became a hotbed of radicalism and terror attacks. In 1995, Russian forces lost the initiative to Chechen fighters, who took an entire hospital hostage and forced negotiations.[21] In turn, the war effort absorbed so many resources and so much leadership attention that military reform, especially conversion to a volunteer force, became impossible. Starved of funds and forces, the Russian army and MVD troops struggled to control the rebel republic before rising Russian antimilitarism prompted their withdrawal at the end of 1996. As Pavel Baev wryly observed, "The military's identity as a presidential institution became almost meaningless as the president lost interest in the armed forces."[22]

During the later 1990s, career soldiers often turned to second jobs to make up for their loss of pay. Ambitious regional leaders within the Russian Federation sought control of the elite Interior Ministry formations, such as the Special Purpose Militia Units (Otriad Militii Osobogo Naznacehniia, OMON) and Special Rapid Reaction Units (Spetsial'nye Otriad Bystrogo Reagirovniia, SOBR). Such paramilitary units were significant not only to ensure domestic political control but also to respond to intermittent terrorist and extremist attacks.

That extremist threat took on new urgency on August 2, 1999, when warlords Shamil Basayev and Ibn al-Khattab used Chechnya as a base to invade the neighboring Russian republic of Dagestan, claiming to establish an Islamic republic there. The invading force consisted of perhaps eight hundred Chechen and other Islamic radicals, many of them foreign fighters who had experience in Afghanistan. Anticipating such an attack, Dagestan authorities had strengthened their battalion of OMON, while Moscow dispatched airborne and Spetsnaz (special operations troops, controlled by the GRU, or Main Intelligence Directorate) to reinforce the MVD 102nd Brigade. By September 20, the federal forces had repelled the invasion of Dagestan at a cost of 275 soldiers and interior troops killed and 937 wounded.[23]

Moscow's strong response to the Dagestan invasion was due largely to Vladimir Putin, whom President Yeltsin had coincidentally promoted to prime minister that same month. Putin was a former career officer of the KGB and, more recently, head of the Russian Federal Security Service (Federal'naya sluzhba bezopasnosti, FSB). He had bitterly regretted the passing of the USSR, KGB, and other instruments of federal authority, as well as the loss of the non-Russian republics of the USSR. Putin therefore seized upon the Dagestan

crisis as a pretext to reassert Moscow's power. In doing so, he took a considerable political risk, but many Russians responded emotionally to his appeal to restore order and central authority. Although Russian forces used massive firepower to achieve more success in the Second Chechen War than in the First, the conflict again absorbed so many resources that it delayed fundamental military reform.[24]

Nonetheless, Russia finally won the second conflict. The population of the rebellious areas became increasingly war-weary, while Moscow provided reconstruction aid that encouraged them to avoid prolonging the struggle. Chechens began to inform against the jihadists, leading to a number of Russian successes against the rebel leadership. Russia attempted to avoid the nationalist issue by fielding competent local, Chechen counterterrorism forces, especially GRU-controlled Spetsnaz special operators and FSB-controlled intelligence officials and border guards. Because so many Chechen Islamists had emigrated to support Hezbollah in Lebanon, the government of Israel began to cooperate with Russian intelligence to recruit agents throughout the Caucasus to track their opponents. In 2003–5, the government of Azerbaijan also rolled up various jihadist networks, foiling an apparent Iranian plan to use the Chechen Islamists as a base to disrupt oil production in the region. Although Chechnya and Dagestan remained unstable regions, by 2006 the Russian security forces had achieved substantial victory, albeit at a substantial cost in both blood and treasure.[25] A group of determined Chechen fighters, named the Dudayev Battalion in honor of the assassinated regional leader, continued to oppose the Russians even during the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.[26]

Downsizing for the Peace Dividend

The demise of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact led inevitably to major reductions in the American armed forces, forces that had been nurtured with such care and expense during the 1980s. The Kuwait crisis inspired only a brief pause in the rush to demobilize the US Army for the sixth time in ninety years. Congressional reductions were in full swing less than a year after Desert Storm, offering the Defense Department little time to identify national security requirements in the post-Soviet era.

To its credit, the civilian government recognized that the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines of 1992 differed in one significant aspect from their predecessors at the end of previous conflicts—every one of them was a volunteer whom the Department of Defense had recruited with (in theory) the prospect of a military career, yet few of them had reached the twenty-year minimum of service to qualify for retirement. Acknowledging this implied obligation, Congress authorized the Variable Separation Incentive (VSI), a sort of

disenlistment bonus based on the number of years of active military service. The lower-level management of the armed forces, NCOs and officers with between six and seventeen years of service, had a strong inducement to accept VSI before they were forced to leave. The offer even came in two forms: a single lump-sum payout or a longer series of annual payments for twice the service member's years of service, with the latter carrying the obligation to remain in a reserve component. Some of these annual recipients would return to active duty for a year or longer after 9/11.

The various services implemented the congressional program differently based on their personnel needs. Facing the lion's share of reductions, the US Army permitted almost anyone to request VSI and discharge *provided* that the individual had not previously been identified for discharge after failing to be promoted. Only a few specialists, such as Foreign Area Officers who were needed to verify destruction of Soviet/Russian strategic weapons, were denied the opportunity to resign. The USAF followed an opposite policy, offering VSI *only* to those who had already been "passed over" for promotion.[27] The navy allowed almost anyone to request VSI. Overall, the army encouraged voluntary departures that exceeded normal attrition by up to 13 percent, thereby helping to meet its reduced end strengths in a less painful manner than after Vietnam.[28] Between voluntary and involuntary discharges, the army shed 100,000 active-duty troops in 1992, while the other services also shrank to a lesser degree.[29] In the process, however, the military may have lost some specialists it should have retained. Within a few years, the army's Reserve Personnel Management Center was advertising for honorably discharged captains and majors to return to active duty.

The Vietnam conflict had left professional soldiers with a strong distaste for counterinsurgency and low-intensity conflict. In fact, an amendment to the 1987 Defense Authorization Act shifted responsibility for low-intensity training and operations from the US Army and Marine Corps to the newly formed Special Operations Command, a move widely if incorrectly interpreted as meaning that conventional forces need no longer be concerned with low-intensity contingencies.[30] Meanwhile, the US armed services had worked diligently to build a well-trained and equipped, technologically advanced force capable of defeating a major conventional power such as the Soviet Union. This force had performed superbly against the Soviet-equipped Iraqis in 1991, and therefore the armed services sought to retain as much as possible of their Cold War capabilities. Many observers, both in uniform and out, portrayed China and even Japan as emerging economic powers that might well require a new version of military containment or deterrence, but these arguments gained little traction politically.

As manpower sank rapidly, all of the services sought to redefine their doctrinal missions for the new era. Air Force Manual 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force* (1992), began with Clausewitzian definitions of war and its objectives before moving quickly to its customary focus on the ability to concentrate airpower anywhere while emphasizing a systems approach to selection and targeting of weapons.[31] Along with this doctrinal review, in June 1992 the USAF disbanded three of its major headquarters—the Tactical Air, Strategic Air, and Military Airlift Commands—putting most combat aircraft under Air Combat Command and transport aircraft under Air Mobility Command.

The US Navy had long possessed a classified doctrine, most recently centered on the composite warfare commander framework. Now, however, the service turned to unclassified doctrine that would highlight the navy's potential in the post–Cold War era. The Navy Department first published a brief concept paper entitled ". . . From the Sea" and then created a new Naval Doctrine Command that produced a series of manuals to flesh out that concept. Except for the naval examples they cited, these manuals used concepts identical to those of the other services, including the principles of war, attritional versus maneuver warfare, tempo, and domination of the battle space. Naval Doctrine Publication 1, *Naval Warfare*, also detailed an extensive list of "Naval Operations Other than War" that described traditional roles including noncombatant evacuation and more recent functions such as drug interdictions and enforcement of UN economic sanctions.[32] Overall, the navy sought to continue the constant forward deployment or presence that it had maintained throughout the Cold War, but with a shrinking fleet.

At the end of the 1980s, the US Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) had already begun a periodic review of basic doctrine, driven in part by a need to avert further budgetary and personnel cuts like those applied to the army in 1987–89. Similarly, the army staff established a working group known as Antaeus in an attempt to anticipate future requirements and changes in force structure.[33] TRADOC paused this process in 1990 because of the obvious flux in the world situation. The US Army chief of staff, Gordon Sullivan, then chose Frederick M. Franks Jr., who had commanded VII Corps during Desert Storm, to be the next head of TRADOC. Despite the widely held belief that the Iraqi conflict had validated the existing AirLand Battle doctrine, Franks deliberately sought to rethink basic assumptions in order to fit the army for post–Cold War situations. In particular, the 1993 edition of Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, focused on the army at the strategic level, including the problems of force deployment and redeployment, joint operations, post-hostilities actions, and "Operations Other than War."[34] This emphasis

appeared to assume that force projection typically would be as brief in duration and as decisive as it had been in Panama and Kuwait. Moreover, although Franks clearly intended to retain much of the previous doctrine, the focus on force projection at the strategic level unintentionally reduced the emphasis on the operational level of war. The very discussion of levels of war moved from a prominent position at the front of the manual to chapter 6.[35]

In the coordination process prior to publishing this new edition, the other services generally agreed with this view of the army's role, although army–air force issues such as the fire support coordination line, which dictated restrictions on battlefield air activity, remained in doubt. In an era of reduced resources, however, the other services tended to fund capabilities that the army considered vital, such as airlift and sealift, at relatively low levels. The Marine Corps, which had its own conceptions of how to fight tactically and operationally, still found areas of agreement with the army and navy.

These doctrinal efforts intertwined with a change in presidential administrations and various efforts to define the purpose and resources of the post–Cold War defense forces. Numerous proposals of this type came and went,[36] but the most influential event was the so-called Bottom-Up Review ordered by Defense Secretary Leslie Aspin during 1993. The resulting report established a number of enduring concepts in national security, beginning with the yardstick that the United States, in concert with its allies, should have sufficient military forces to win two major regional conflicts (MRCs, sometimes referred to as major theater wars) that occurred nearly simultaneously. Civilian defense officials under the Bush administration had objected to the expense of using two MRCs as a yardstick, but the Aspin review finessed that by assuming that the United States could "hold" on the defensive in one theater while winning in the other.[37]

The "2 MRC" rule of thumb was a useful construct both for planning in a post–Cold War world and for justifying the retention of a significant portion of the armed forces so painstakingly created during the 1980s. Unfortunately for future American military efforts, however, this yardstick sometimes caused Defense Department planners to ignore or neglect military capabilities that fell outside the assumed regional conflicts of Northeast Asia and Southwest Asia. Gen. George Joulwan, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, as well as commander in chief, US European Command, cautioned the Joint Staff planners that the 2 MRC approach deprived Europe of its designation as a likely theater of war; that in turn meant that American capacity to support NATO declined sharply, producing difficulties when the United States had to fulfill its NATO responsibilities in Bosnia and Kosovo (see chapter 5).[38]

The Bottom-Up Review also identified four phases of US combat operations, phases that became standard terminology for the next two decades:

I. Halt the invasion.
II. Build up US combat power in theater while reducing that of the enemy.
III. Decisively defeat the opponent.
IV. Provide for postwar stability.[39]

This conception was clearly oriented on blocking conventional threats of regional aggression and cited the possible North Korean invasion of the South and renewed hostilities in the Persian Gulf as examples. Again, this concept appeared to assume that, as in Panama and Kuwait, deployments to meet such crises would be measured in months rather than decades. In fairness to the authors, the 1993 review also recognized that, in the future, American forces were more likely to be involved in "operations short of declared or intense warfare," including the possibility of ethnic or religious conflict.[40] The document emphasized the need for the United States to be a security partner in various regional issues. Yet, experiences in Somalia and Haiti made the William Clinton administration reluctant to commit American troops on the ground. Only belatedly did American commitments in former Yugoslavia, Haiti, and elsewhere (see chapters 4 and 5) tie up a large portion of the shrunken conventional armed forces. These deployments to less-than-vital regions significantly reduced the American capacity to respond to major contingencies, whether conventional threats or insurgencies. Moreover, such peacekeeping responsibilities necessitated that American units be trained for noncombat, minimal-use-of-force roles before they were deployed and then retrained for conventional warfare afterward, all of which required money and time. For all these reasons, senior commanders resisted peacekeeping commitments.

The Bottom-Up Review attempted to set goals that would permit the steady reduction of force levels and expenditures over the next eight to ten years. The navy, for example, would shrink gradually as major vessels reached the end of their service life. This meant a decline from fifteen attack aircraft carriers to eleven plus one training carrier, and from eighty-six to fifty-five nuclear attack submarines, all while trying to provide sufficient construction contracts to maintain two major shipyards capable of building each form of vessel. The army would shrink from eighteen active and ten National Guard divisions to ten and six, respectively, while the air force would eventually level off at thirteen active and seven reserve component fighter wings. By contrast, the Marine Corps lost only a few maneuver battalions, retaining 164,000 active personnel in three Marine Expeditionary Forces plus 42,000 in the Marine Corps Reserve. By

2003, the review envisioned a reduced but still robust nuclear triad that included eighteen Trident ballistic missile submarines, five hundred Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles, and a bomber force of ninety-four B-52s and twenty B-2s.[41]

Army critics noted that the Bottom-Up Review appeared driven more by budgetary than by national security considerations, tending, for example, to treat army and marine units as almost interchangeable despite significant differences in capability and doctrine. Moreover, having slashed the army on the basis that the Soviet threat was gone, the study did not apply the same logic fully to the force structure of the other services.[42] Again, the question was whether forces should be sized to oppose specific threats, according to the 2 MRC rule, or to provide a repertoire of various capabilities to counter ill-defined and unpredictable future dangers.

Although the Aspin-led Defense Department intended to reduce the Army Reserve components from 700,000 to 575,000 in six years, it simultaneously planned to put greater emphasis on National Guard and Army Reserve readiness and deployment, with a goal of deployment within ninety days for fifteen "enhanced readiness" Guard brigades. The heavy demands of the Kuwait crisis had already justified a restructuring that eliminated various headquarters while forming a unified US Army Reserve Command in 1991–92. Yet, full-time manning of reserve units, the essential cadre that administers the units and maintains equipment between training assemblies, shrank during the 1990s. The reserve components also continued to suffer from equipment shortages, of which only some were replenished by withdrawals of wartime equipment stocks from Europe.[43]

The army initially failed to get funding to maintain a set of unit equipment in Saudi Arabia and thus turned to maritime prepositioning in a manner that seemed to impinge on the Marine Corps efforts in that area. By 1994, however, there were two brigade sets of equipment located in Kuwait, where soldiers from the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) deployed by air in a sort of mini-Reforger exercise dubbed Operation Vigilant Warrior.[44]

Waves of Reformers

Nor was the Bottom-Up Review the only such effort to redesign and resize the Defense Department. For numerous observers in Congress and defense think tanks, the advent of new technology appeared to justify radical restructuring of the armed forces, to take advantage of information networking, airborne surveillance systems, PGMs, and outsourcing to civilian contractors to capitalize on a perceived revolutions in military affairs (RMA).[45] For such reformers, funds expended to maintain the existing, "legacy" forces of the United

States seemed wasted. Regardless of the validity of the RMA construct for the conduct of high-intensity conventional conflict, this vision of the future did not acknowledge the constant demands placed on the armed forces for the various peacekeeping/peace enforcement operations of the 1990s. Such contingency operations required airlift, sealift, infantry, and logistical capabilities, not to mention specialized units such as military police, engineers, and civil affairs.

At the same time, demands to streamline headquarters meant an overall one-third reduction in the headquarters staffs of service departments and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.[46] While smaller field forces might justify some cuts, these reductions hampered the Pentagon's ability to analyze, plan, and manage the armed forces for future requirements.

In 1994, the desire for change prompted Congress to mandate an independent Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces. Working against a short suspense date, the commission avoided major shifts in the armed forces, instead advocating the outsourcing of warehousing, depot maintenance, and auditing as well as a reduction in the number of political appointees in the Defense Department—with the latter recommendation achieving little traction.[47]

Three years later, Congress added the first of a series of Quadrennial Defense Reviews (QDRs). In the first such review, Defense Secretary William Cohen embraced the concepts of information warfare, while the Joint Staff conducted extensive studies, including simulations of possible conflicts, but concluded without recommending major changes in force structure. In 1997, a National Defense Panel attempted to define a strategic concept that would cover the next two decades, such as using an "air offensive" to resolve the shortfall in ground forces when dealing with two MRCs. Overall, these policy reviews consumed much of the energy, attention, and manpower available in the Joint Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and service departments.[48]

As they had in previous periods of peacetime, during the 1990s the armed services also tested changes in field organizations. The army conducted a series of experiments under the general heading of Force XXI, seeking to reduce the size of maneuver units to ease strategic deployment while introducing information systems and other innovations to improve command and control. One of the principal such tests reconfigured the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized). The division's total strength sank by approximately 1,000 men to 15,700, but this modest reduction eliminated one of four companies in each maneuver battalion, for a total 24 percent decrease in major weapons systems. The new division gave each brigade a reconnaissance troop equipped with motorized rather than mechanized vehicles, with a consequent reduction in the ability to fight to develop information.[49]

Closely related to such concepts was so-called Network-Centric Warfare, the belief that information technology could be used to increase situational awareness and coordination between military elements.[50] In 2001, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld appointed retired vice admiral Arthur K. Cebrowski as director of the Office of Force Transformation to champion such ideas.

Economic Impact

Running parallel to these debates about roles, functions, and resources were a series of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) actions. Created in 1988, the BRAC process sought to overcome the pork barrel considerations that for several decades had prevented the disposition of real estate considered surplus to defense requirements. Beginning during the Civil War and continuing for a century thereafter, the armed forces had accumulated a large number of installations that were too small for modern training requirements or otherwise no longer useful. A bipartisan, independent commission considered a list of possible bases submitted by the defense secretary. That commission submitted its recommendations to the president, and if he approved those recommendations, Congress had to accept or reject the entire list, without changes. In 1988, 1991, 1993, 1995, and 2005, successive BRAC cycles identified and disposed of large amounts of federal property.[51]

Ostensibly, the intent of this process was to save money, but a number of considerations hampered such savings. Some of the posts involved were on valuable real estate but included buildings on the national historical registry, such as those at Fort Sheridan in the Chicago area and the Presidio of San Francisco. One service might propose closure of an installation that was a burden on its budget, without considering how that closure might affect nearby installations belonging to other services. The loss of posts including Fort Ord, California, and Fort Devens, Massachusetts, also reduced options for redeploying forces from Germany to the United States during the 1990s.[52]

Moreover, these installations also included hazardous materials such as unexploded ordnance. A typical example of the result was Jefferson Proving Ground, a small post outside Madison, Indiana, that was used to test ammunition and to house three small Army Reserve units. The cost of maintaining a small staff, including a fire department, on such a marginal post made it a natural candidate for base closure, and in 1995 much of it became a wildlife refuge area while the buildings were made available for civilian businesses. However, the post had also been used as a bomb range by the Indiana Air National Guard, and it contained large amounts of depleted uranium from armor penetrators fired into the impact area while testing ammunition. As such, part

of the installation could never be cleared for alternative uses and requires periodic monitoring by the government.[53]

One side effect of the peace dividend was that the American defense industry, which already depended heavily on government contracts, faced a grim future with far fewer weapons orders. While perhaps not as hidebound as its Soviet equivalent, American industry underwent some of the same issues in developing other markets. During the Cold War, Washington had strictly controlled arms exports even to friends such as Israel, let alone neutral states. Immediately after Desert Storm, however, the Bush administration relaxed such restrictions, taking advantage of the international clamor to buy weapons such as those that had defeated Iraq. The Clinton administration formalized this relaxation in Presidential Directive 41, which instructed all departments to promote foreign sales of American weapons; PD 41 also made the economic impact a factor to be considered in approving arms transfers. The previous year, Defense Secretary William Perry and his undersecretary, John Deutsch, had developed the Perry-Deutsch initiative to broaden cooperation with Western allies so that new weapons development could be shared between partners. Orders from states such as Saudi Arabia sustained the production capability for M1-series tanks and other expensive, low-density weapons when American requirements lapsed.

In 1999, Gen. Eric Shinseki became chief of staff of the US Army. An armored cavalry officer who had commanded the Stabilization Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (see chapter 5), Shinseki had developed both an acute sense of the problems of counterinsurgency and a desire to improve the rapid deployment capabilities of the army. In addition to airborne and light infantry capabilities, Shinseki championed the creation of so-called Stryker brigades, infantry units mounted in deployable, lightly armored vehicles called Strykers. Intended as an interim solution to the long-term needs of the army, this initiative began the evolution of the army force structure into brigades having fixed organizations rather than being task organized and tailored by their division headquarters.[54]

The United Kingdom

The conclusion of the Cold War also prompted major changes in the armed forces of America's partners. Having maintained, on a lesser scale, most of the capabilities of the US military, Britain's defense contraction almost inevitably paralleled that of its major ally.

In July 1990, the secretary of state for defence, Thomas King, proposed the "Options for Change" in defense spending. He envisioned reducing the British army of the Rhine from four divisions to two, with Royal Air Force (RAF) air

defense cut to seven squadrons and ground attack reduced to six squadrons of Tornados. The Royal Navy, which had just completed an expansion after the Falklands/Malvinas conflict, would eventually decline to three carriers, forty destroyers or frigates, sixteen attack submarines, and the four Trident missile submarines that constituted Britain's minimum nuclear deterrence force. By the mid-1990s, King projected an active army of 120,000, an RAF of 75,000, and a combined Royal Navy/Royal Marines of only 60,000.[55]

Even these levels, which King proposed as an interim response until future defense needs could be defined more clearly, involved reducing defense spending from 5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) to 3 percent. It also marked the start of a series of painful reductions, with centuries-old regiments combining and recombining their lineages into an increasingly shrunken army. Subsequent decisions to send 45,000 service members to Desert Storm and 2,300 to former Yugoslavia provided a stay of execution for a few infantry battalions, but the 1990s as a whole marked a sharp reduction in the British defense forces. By 2003, the British army had been reduced to 104,000 and was trying to stave off further cuts.[56] Even before this, the Royal Navy's vertical take-off and landing carriers were only one-fifth the tonnage of a US *Nimitz*-class carrier, and the armed service chiefs encountered much resistance when they sought to build larger carriers at the end of the decade.[57] In 2008, Whitehall authorized construction of two new carriers to carry the American-designed F-35B, but then repeatedly attempted to mothball one of these vessels, HMS *Prince of Wales*, to cut costs.

By 1998, British defense spending had declined to 2.5 percent of GDP and the Royal Navy had reoriented from defending sea lines of communication to projecting power for contingency operations, often in cooperation with the United States. The "Special Relationship" did earn Britain access to American technology such as Tomahawk cruise missiles, but cooperation with other European states waned.[58] Subsequent reductions in budgets led in 2021 to an additional cut of 10,000 British soldiers, leaving an active army of only 72,500 with an atrophied ground reserve.[59]

German Defense Issues

Germany's defense adaptation after 1990 was even more stressful than that of most countries, in large measure because the federal republic had to downsize and combine two vastly dissimilar armed forces. The Bundeswehr of West Germany had been restricted in its mission—territorial defense—as well as its political orientation. Despite having been organized by veteran commanders of the Third Reich, the Bundeswehr considered itself to be a representative force for constitutional democracy and patriotism. It regarded its rival, the

East German Nationale Volksarmee (NVA), as a party army of Communist traitors, descendants of the National Committee for a Free Germany formed during World War II with Soviet backing and including many captured German officers. Conversely, the NVA's officers claimed for themselves the title of antifascist and viewed the Bundeswehr as an outgrowth of the Nazi forces.[60]

Nor did the merger of these rival armies occur in a vacuum. French president François Mitterand and British prime minister Margaret Thatcher were both skeptical about national reunification, fearing a return to German expansionism. As part of German efforts to reassure the rest of Europe that the Bundeswehr was not interested in combat missions, the combined Bundeswehr/NVA "Army of Unity" was therefore limited to 370,000, whereas in 1989 the two separate armed forces' strength had been 585,000 and almost 100,000, respectively.[61] Chancellor Helmut Kohl reportedly committed to the 370,000 figure—for both army and air force—without consulting his military advisers.[62]

The NVA suffered disproportionately in this amalgamation. On October 3, 1990, the effective date of the unification treaty, all property and personnel of the NVA were transferred to Bundeswehr control. General officers, all personnel over age fifty-five, and all nonmedical female soldiers were retired or discharged immediately—and NVA personnel got little if any retirement credit for their years of service to the Communist regime. All officers above the rank of lieutenant colonel were relieved of their positions. While 51,000 career NVA soldiers were offered an initial enlistment of two years, 39,000 conscripts had to serve out their term of service. During that period, a detailed questionnaire and interview process sought to eliminate political officers as well as anyone associated with intelligence or informing for the East German secret police (Stasi). Only 3,000 NVA officers and 7,800 NCOs and enlisted soldiers reached career status, often with lower ranks than they had held before the merger.[63] By 2006, when the Bundeswehr as a whole had shrunk to 250,000, only 800 former NVA officers remained on active duty.[64]

At the same time, the Bundeswehr remained the same mechanized home-defense force that it had been during the Cold War, experiencing political as well as practical difficulties in projecting significant power even into former Yugoslavia. Perhaps the most valuable steps at defense reform were political, going through legislative debates and the Karlsruhe Constitutional Court to validate the legality of foreign deployments.[65]

Shrinking European Forces

The identity crisis of a reunified Germany helps explain why that state was one of the last European powers to convert to volunteer forces, suspending conscription only in 2011. The United Kingdom and United States had halted

conscription in 1960 and 1973, respectively, but other nations continued the draft into the 1990s. The deceptive appearance of peace after the Cold War encouraged most of the European states to give up the draft in favor of smaller, more capable military forces.

Although conscription had provided the essential manpower to prepare for general conflict, even during the Cold War many governments had excused their draftees from service outside the homeland. (French use of such soldiers during the Algerian War was an exception justified by the fact that Algeria was legally part of the nation.) The mixture of conscripts with career soldiers in most military units hampered France's efforts to project power overseas, other than through the Foreign Legion and a few volunteer units. During the Kuwait crisis, for example, the French army, which (including paramilitary police) numbered 500,000 active-duty and 3 million reservists, was hard-pressed to deploy 15,000 volunteer soldiers to Saudi Arabia. The Netherlands even permitted short-service volunteers to opt out of deployments, resulting in dangerously low manning levels for the Dutch units deployed to Bosnia.[66]

Moreover, the apparent inequities of who actually had to serve made conscription increasingly unpopular in European states. Deteriorating physical fitness, options for civilian service, and other factors meant that, by the early 1990s, more than one-quarter of young French men and more women escaped military service.[67]

Despite such considerations, the conversion from conscript to volunteer forces was often difficult, in part because professional soldiers rightly anticipated difficulties in recruiting sufficient volunteers without the impetus of conscription. France reduced national service from twelve months to ten in 1992, and in 1997 decided to phase out all conscription by 2002. In the process, active-duty forces declined to 436,000, although the increased costs of recruitment and career military pay meant that defense budgets declined very little. The Netherlands similarly converted to a volunteer force. After reducing its army from 128,000 to 50,000, it could field only three brigades. Both governments continued the legal obligation for military service, often summoning eighteen-year-olds to a single day of recruiting lectures and testing.[68] Other European governments, such as Spain and Italy, followed suit; Rome found that an all-volunteer force consumed up to 70 percent of its defense budget for pay and training.[69] Most European defense budgets declined gradually during the last decade of the century, as illustrated by Spain spending only 1.2 percent of GDP. The principal exceptions were Greece and Turkey, each of which spent about 3.5 percent of GDP, in part because of lingering antagonisms against each other.[70]

Despite an influx of practical experience in Afghanistan, the German armed forces steadily declined under the comfortable political illusion that there was

no major threat to national security. By 2022, the active-duty force had shrunk to 180,000 troops, 300 tanks (of which only 130 were fully operational), 700 armored personnel carriers, 18 major warships, and 230 combat aircraft. The German military's communications and computing reportedly lagged behind those of its NATO allies.[71]

A decade after the Berlin Wall fell, Western military forces had shrunk to a level that was ill-equipped to deploy peacekeeping forces on a sustained basis, let alone to deter aggression when the Russian Federation regained its military capabilities.

CHAPTER 4

Mission Creep?

Somalia, Haiti, and Lebanon

At the conclusion of the Thirty Years War (1618–48), the Peace of Westphalia established the principle that a government has exclusive sovereignty over religion and other policies within its own state. There were exceptions, of course, especially in the nineteenth century when journalistic exposés pressured the Western powers to protect minority groups within the Ottoman Empire.[1] Yet, in general sovereignty remained inviolable. Since the 1980s, however, both the United Nations and individual states have increasingly asserted a need to interfere in the sovereignty of other states. Some of these interventions might have been morally justifiable, but they all involved political, military, and cultural complexities.

In some instances, the pretext for intrusion has been that an unrecognized entity or nonstate actor hijacked control of the legal government, as when the Palestine Liberation Organization took control of Lebanon during the 1970s and used it as a base for attacks on Israel. In other cases, such as Somalia and Haiti, the existing government was no longer able to provide minimal services for the populace. Eventually, violation of sovereignty was justified under the much debated concept of responsibility to protect (R2P), usually as a means of preventing genocide or other crimes against the people whose government was unwilling to or incapable of protecting.

Regardless of the circumstances, however, these intrusions into a country's internal affairs usually began with a limited goal, such as stopping cross-border attacks or feeding the population. Unfortunately, the complexities of local culture and politics required redefinition and expansion of the original mission. Large portions of the affected population offered violent resistance to any foreign interference, however well-intentioned that interference might have been. Rightly or wrongly, critics have lamented subsequent shifts in military responsibilities, whereby military forces took on an obligation to attempt "nation

building" by replacing the nonfunctional government with a new structure, as "mission creep." As Jonathan Bailey has observed, "When nations commit forces to an operation, they are in effect committing them to a variety of tasks which may be ill-defined at the outset."[2]

A Failed State

The Somali people had only minor divisions of language and ethnicity, but other factors split them deeply. First, during the colonial period the Somalis were carved up between French Djibouti, Italian and British Somaliland, Ethiopia, and British Kenya. When the two Somalilands united as an independent state in 1960, colonial traditions and languages hampered the creation of an effective government.[3]

More significantly, Somali society was divided between six clans and up to twenty subclans. Some of these groups had historical ties of kinship, while others were ancestral enemies. Maj. Gen. Mohammed Siad Barre, who seized power in October 1969, initially used the rhetoric of Marxism and attempted to suppress clan loyalties. When this failed, he turned to ruling through the three subclans to which he was related, playing off other groups against each other.[4] When challenged by opponents, Siad Barre attacked civilians of opposing clans.

In July 1977, Siad Barre attacked Ethiopia in an ill-fated attempt to seize territory. In the Ogaden War, which ended eight months later, Soviet and Cuban forces helped the Ethiopians to victory, significantly weakening the Somali armed forces and encouraging opposition to the regime there.[5] Over the ensuing fourteen years, Siad Barre managed to alienate almost every major clan, including his own original supporters. Blatant atrocities prompted Washington to withdraw any remaining support for Siad Barre in 1990. After two months of serious fighting in Mogadishu, he fled the capital in January 1991 and soon went into exile. His opponents fell out with each other, and the country descended into chaos.

Two opposing warlords of the United Somali Congress (USC), each supported by rival subclans of the Hawiya clan, divided Mogadishu itself—Maj. Gen. Mohammed Farah Aideed (Habar Gidir subclan) had his center of power in the southern part of the city, while Ali Mahdi Mohammed (Abgaal subclan, associated with both Hawiya and Samaale clans), the nominal president of Somalia, was in the northern half. Aideed later renamed his faction the Somali National Alliance (SNA). Although critics often depicted him as a thug, Aideed was actually a career army officer who had attended the Soviet Frunze Academy and later served as Somali head of intelligence and ambassador to India.

Aideed and Ali Mahdi each sought to deny food to his opponents, interfering with foreign humanitarian aid efforts. Press reports of famine, complicated by

Somalia. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

severe drought in southern Somalia, prompted the intervention of the United States and other countries.[6] Humanitarian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were forced to purchase protection, hiring "technical advisers" as security even though the advisers continued to steal food; by extension, the heavy weapons trucks operated by these militiamen became known as "technicals."

In April 1992, the UN Security Council created the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) to provide protection and large food shipments. Regrettably, only five hundred lightly equipped Pakistani peacekeepers were able to enter the divided country, and these troops had such restrictive rules of engagement that they were unable to move, let alone protect NGOs from robbery.[7] Under Operation Provide Relief, the USAF used C-130s for airlifting food to small airfields outside Mogadishu, but local looters and thugs plundered that supply as well. Aideed's clan controlled and limited off-loading of food in the capital city. By late 1992, some 600,000 Somalis had become refugees while several hundred thousand additional civilians were internally displaced. UN efforts to build consensus were hampered by the inadequate size of the field staff, communications difficulties, and the reluctance of the UN Secretariat to authorize any policy changes.[8]

Operation Provide Hope

Press coverage as well as his own moral compass motivated President Bush to intervene, but for several months his advisers were divided on the issue. Reflecting the limitations embodied in the Weinberger Doctrine of 1984, General Powell and most staff officers were cautious about any military involvement in the crisis and sought a clearly defined, achievable end state for a short-term intervention. By contrast, State Department and US Agency for International Development officials repeatedly urged American military action to secure airfields, storage sites, and key roads without an overall security plan for Somalia.[9]

On November 25, 1992, Bush decided to intervene, provided that the UN Security Council would agree; he dispatched acting secretary of state Lawrence Eagleburger to New York, where he engaged in prolonged negotiations that led to a unanimous UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 794 on December 3. In effect, this resolution suspended the existing UN-controlled operation temporarily. Instead, it authorized the United States to lead its own multinational force to restore some semblance of order, although the Americans did imply that they would provide troops for a subsequent resumption of UNOSOM operations. The change also marked a shift in governing provisions of the UN Charter. Whereas previous UN operations had operated under the restrictive rules of Chapter VI (Pacific Settlement of Disputes), UNSCR 794 cited Chapter VII (Actions with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breeches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression).[10] The resulting American-led force, which UN officials asked be named United Task Force or UNITAF, was in effect a throwback to the United Nations Command that fought the Korean War, at a time when UN peacekeeping was in its infancy.

The American conception of UNITAF reflected not only the Weinberger Doctrine but also its previous experience in Panama and Kuwait. Instead of

an open-ended, vaguely defined UN mission, UNITAF would be a short-duration deployment to achieve very specific, limited objectives, followed by a quick withdrawal before public opinion turned against the operation. Bush even hoped that the deployment would end before he left the White House on January 20, 1993, although his advisers quickly discounted the chances of that. Still, Central Command had already coordinated with the Joint Chiefs for an extremely limited mission: "When directed by the [National Command Authority], CINCCENT will conduct joint and combined military operations in Somalia to secure the major air and seaports, key installations and food distribution points, to provide open and free passage of relief supplies, to provide security for convoys and relief organization operations and assist UN/NGOs in providing humanitarian relief under UN auspices . . ."[11]

This definition at first made no mention of disarming the factions; as a practical matter, real disarmament was an impossible goal in a country awash with weaponry. Between 1975 and 1992, an estimated $13 billion in arms had arrived in Somalia, including $9 billion from the USSR alone. On December 2, General Powell informed CENTCOM that the mission would have to include "disarm, as necessary, forces which interfere with humanitarian relief operations."[12] Such a pragmatic goal was far less than what the UN staff thought necessary to end civil strife and rebuild society.

The CENTCOM commander, USMC general Joseph Hoar, designated I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) as the joint headquarters for Operation Provide Hope/UNITAF. I MEF had previously conducted a command post exercise on the issue, and its commander, Lt. Gen. Robert Johnston, had been CENTCOM chief of staff during Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Both CENTCOM and I MEF headquarters requested liaison officers from the nations contributing to UNITAF and persuaded those contingents to follow the rules of engagement drafted at CENTCOM.[13] These ROE, in contrast to the severe restrictions previously placed on UNOSOM, authorized the troops involved to use force if the opposition displayed hostile intent or other threat to them.

Although some Special Forces personnel had visited Somalia under UNOSOM, UNITAF initially had little intelligence about the political complexities on the ground. Instead, it focused on creating secure conditions to provide relief aid. It was therefore unavoidable that the occupation of southern Somalia occurred without regard to clan boundaries; instead, it sought to secure ports and airfields that were designated as the centers of different humanitarian relief sectors. Moreover, by basing themselves in the dense urban terrain of central Mogadishu, the UNITAF forces limited their later ability to maneuver.[14]

Although CENTCOM and I MEF had planned in advance, below that level the hasty nature of the operation produced some disconnects. Most significantly,

the 10th Mountain Division was only designated as the Army component of the force on December 3, six days after the 1st Marine Division got its assignment. This delay was apparently caused by a plan to send elements of the 101st Air Assault Division, a proposal eventually rejected because of the additional fuel and maintenance requirements for the air assault units in comparison to light infantry. In the interim, Third US Army, the Army component headquarters for CENTCOM, participated in the initial planning conferences, which left the 10th Mountain staff struggling to catch up.[15]

This delay compounded an often overlooked problem, the shortage of staff officers experienced in joint and combined (i.e., multinational) operations. The Goldwater-Nichols Act had mandated improvement in these areas, but implementation required decades to change institutional cultures and grow joint-minded officers within the armed forces. Whereas the unified commands and their component headquarters had (with the exception of XVIII Airborne Corps) managed Operations Just Cause and Desert Storm, this time the burden fell on single-service headquarters, with I MEF in charge and the 1st Marine and 10th Mountain Divisions acting as the Marine (MARFOR) and Army (ARFOR) headquarters. All three headquarters had to deal with unfamiliar issues concerning the other armed services as well as foreign contingents. Even details as simple as their word processing programs were incompatible. I MEF headquarters underwent a significant reorganization, including absorbing many augmentee Army officers, to become a joint and combined headquarters. By the same token, the UN staff lacked the military expertise to cooperate with a US-led operation and proved completely unprepared to manage its own subsequent military efforts in Somalia.[16]

Cold War regional alliances had ensured that many of the other military participants in UNITAF were familiar with US procedures and brought their own support elements. Beyond that, some of the contingents from developing nations required significant logistical support from the United States. Doctrinally, the Army was responsible for much of this support, but these critical Army elements often received low priorities for deployment. The transportation unit responsible for operating the Mogadishu port did not arrive until most of the military equipment had already been off-loaded. Focused on humanitarian relief, UNITAF and CENTCOM staffs initially saw no need for Army Civil Affairs personnel, even though the few Civil Affairs soldiers who finally arrived were instrumental in assisting local government and humanitarian activities.[17]

The dearth of understanding about other services also affected deployment of the 10th Mountain Division. A Defense Department ceiling of 10,200 Army soldiers in-country superficially appeared to allow for two-thirds of a light division, but after deductions for engineers, logistics, and other specialized elements, there were only enough remaining spaces for the 10th Mountain to

deploy a brigade headquarters with two infantry battalions and support troops. Even this small force was limited by the lack of transportation. Hard-pressed by the other requirements of the deployment, Air Mobility Command could provide only three C-141s on the first day of movement for the 10th Mountain, and subsequent days generally saw only twelve rather than the scheduled twenty-eight sorties. Army troops dribbled into Somalia, further complicating UNITAF planning and execution.[18]

In theory, all strategic transportation was controlled by US Transportation Command, working through different headquarters for air- and sealift. In practice, however, all the armed services except the Army possessed some transport aircraft for their own internal requirements. Similarly, in at least one instance Marine planners held back a transport ship for their service use when it should have been centrally managed. Moreover, the Somali ports were initially limited in size and in the draft of vessels they could accommodate. Common user supplies were on deeper-draft ships that had to offload outside the port, but that process was delayed by high seas.[19] When the bulk of 10th Mountain's heavy equipment finally arrived by sea, the situation appeared so calm that UNITAF headquarters decided the brigade did not need its supporting artillery.[20] That may have been a reasonable conclusion in the short run, but in subsequent situations, ranging from UNOSOM II (see below) to the early war in Afghanistan, similar decisions—which ignored the fact that the Army lacked the kind of dedicated fighter-bombers available to the Marine Corps—left Army troops short of fire support.

One contributing factor to this confusion was the fact that the deployment occurred while the armed forces were already shrinking to peacetime levels (see chapter 3). The 43rd Engineer Battalion (Combat Heavy) had begun inactivation and was shedding personnel and equipment before it was ordered to Somalia. Despite significant shortages, this battalion, together with naval construction troops, went on to repair nine airfields and 2,500 kilometers of neglected roads and bridges, facilitating the movement of relief supplies.[21] Service budgets, already restricted by the peace dividend, were hard-pressed to cover the costs of Somalia.

UNITAF in Place

Most of these disconnects and issues were invisible to anyone beyond the troops immediately involved. What the world—including the Somali warlords—saw was another exhibition of American ability to project power, descending in an avalanche of troops and equipment despite the remote location and lack of infrastructure. While journalists and NGOs sometimes carped about the cautious manner in which UNITAF extended its reach inland from Mogadishu,

by the end of December 1992 the force had taken over the airfields and ports of southern Somalia well ahead of schedule, and relief supplies were once again flowing into the country. The NGOs still had to deal with theft and paying for the protection of the technicals, but the humanitarian crisis was stopped and reversed in remarkably short order.

One reason for this success was that, throughout the existence of UNITAF, American diplomats and commanders kept the lines of communication open with the Somali warlords. Robert Oakley, a retired former ambassador to Somalia, headed the US Liaison Office, the diplomatic presence in the country. Prior to the initial landing in Mogadishu, and again on several occasions as American and coalition troops took over major towns, Oakley and his deputies met with the appropriate warlords and clan elders to inform them of the deployments ahead of time. Most notably, on December 11 the ambassador met with Aideed and Ali Mahdi and pointedly reminded them of the massive firepower displayed during Desert Storm. He also insisted, over Aideed's protests, that Ismat Kittani, the career Iraqi diplomat who represented the UN secretary-general, must be present at these meetings. The two rivals were apparently so impressed by the force about to descend on them that they came to a Seven Point Agreement identifying the principles of a truce to build security in the capital. Under this agreement, most of the "technicals" (vehicle-mounted heavy weapons) would be moved to designated control or cantonment areas by the end of the month. (In this, as in other instances, the Somalis proved more willing to reach agreement in private meetings among themselves than when they were posturing in front of the foreign diplomats sent to mediate.) Thereafter, Aideed, Ali Mahdi, or their representatives participated in regular meetings with diplomats and UNITAF officers, habituating them to problem-solving together. When violence flared, Oakley was able to persuade the warlord responsible to disavow the actions of his subordinates, thereby defusing a confrontation.[22]

Given their self-imposed, limited mission of humanitarian relief rather than national reconciliation, UNITAF commanders could and did maintain political neutrality with regard to the factional rivalry, although each leader tried to manipulate the invaders to score his own political points. A Civil-Military Operations Center defused some of the mutual suspicions between soldiers and NGOs, while the non-American contingents of UNITAF worked closely with Johnston and his staff. Meanwhile, UNITAF established a visible presence, especially in Mogadishu, with constant patrols in much of the city. US Psychological Operations (PSYOP) troops used radio broadcasts, loudspeakers, leaflets, and eventually a local newspaper to inform the populace about UNITAF and to learn about the cultural situation in which they operated. To restore order and protect

relief efforts, at the end of December Johnston approved a checklist originally proposed by Maj. Gen. Steve Arnold, the ARFOR/10th Mountain commander. This list included the "Four No's": no bandits, no checkpoints (roadblocks for extortion), no technical vehicles, and no visible weapons. Instances of Somalis attacking UNITAF troops brought a strong response. When Aideed's technicals fired on a marine convoy in January, the marines surrounded the cantonment sites, disarming one group and destroying another in a firefight, followed by sweeping a local arms market.[23] An overawing military presence went far to deter violence while UNITAF remained in place, although militiamen and starving children pilfered whatever they could.

To reimpose law and order required civilian police, especially given American reluctance to become involved in such matters. The UN Secretariat wanted to restore a police force nationwide rather than just in the capital, while congressional restrictions forbade any US expenditure on police. Moreover, UNITAF had to satisfy the concerns of Aideed and Ali Mahdi that this force would not fall into an opponent's control. Slowly, UNITAF created the "Auxiliary Security Force" (ASF) with NGOs feeding the officers and their families, Italy providing uniforms, American maintenance units refurbishing technical vehicles, and Australians repairing police buildings. International troops were on call to protect the ASF while the hastily trained police attempted crowd control at food distribution sites. Establishment of courts and a prison followed, but the structure was still shaky in March 1993.[24]

Still, the temporary reduction of violence and crime did not translate into meaningful progress on political reconciliation. Aideed was particularly suspicious of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Gali, who in his previous career as an Egyptian diplomat had supported Siad Barre during the Somali civil conflict. The warlord instigated massive, threatening demonstrations when Boutros-Gali visited Mogadishu on January 3, 1993, an incident that only increased the secretary-general's belief that Aideed must be neutralized politically. On January 24 and again on February 22, Siad Barre's son-in-law, Gen. Said Hersi, tried to seize control of the southern port of Kismaayo from an Aideed ally, Col. Omar Jess. In each instance, the two sides backed off when threatened by UNITAF. Aideed was infuriated by the apparent decline in his power. In a show of strength, on February 25 his forces attacked Nigerian peacekeepers in Mogadishu.[25]

UNOSOM II

Despite various conferences in Addis Ababa, political reconciliation made only limited progress. Boutros-Gali's representative on the ground, Kittani, insisted that the UN had no responsibility for a ceasefire so long as UNITAF was in

place; the Iraqi diplomat himself was increasingly sidelined by cancer. Meanwhile, President Bush's temporary, short-term fix was running out of time. Not only the United States but other major participants in UNITAF wanted to end or reduce their commitments in Somalia. While Boutros-Gali tried to demand that UNITAF pacify and disarm the entire country, the incoming Clinton administration insisted, based on the original mission established by its predecessor, that UNITAF had achieved all its goals and would depart, on schedule, on May 4, 1993.

Lt. Gen. Çevik Bir, a Turkish officer with considerable experience in the NATO procedures shared by other participants, became the commander of UNOSOM II, the successor organization to UNITAF. His deputy, Maj. Gen. Thomas M. Montgomery, was simultaneously commander of US Forces in Somalia (USFORSOM), although he had only limited (operational or tactical) control over some of its subordinate units.[26] In an effort to ensure continued US involvement in the region, Boutros-Gali asked for an American successor to the ailing Kittani. This post was filled by retired admiral Jonathan Howe, who had extensive experience in the higher staff echelons of NATO and the United States, including as deputy national security advisor to President Bush. Ambassador Oakley had departed the US Liaison Office in March to emphasize symbolically the shift from US to UN control.

Bir, Montgomery, and Howe were closely agreed on goals and policies for Somalia. Unfortunately, they had almost none of the resources that had made UNITAF so effective. Neither UNOSOM II nor USFORSOM had an effective staff to plan and execute military operations. Both headquarters were ad hoc organizations, with UNOSOM II having less than 30 percent of its authorized staff present at the time of the handover; the designated head of communications (J-6), for example, did not arrive until two weeks later. Much of the painfully developed intelligence knowledge concerning the Somali threat departed when UNITAF was disestablished. Tactically, most US ground troops fell under the Aviation Brigade of the 10th Mountain Division, which assumed control when the original brigade headquarters departed.[27] The Army had formed divisional aviation brigades during the later 1980s, but after the fact critics alleged that such a headquarters lacked experience in managing ground units.

On paper, UNOSOM totaled 28,000 troops from twenty countries, but some of these, including major contributions from India and Pakistan, did not arrive for six months after UNOSOM II began operations, and other troops never arrived. Initially, the US planned to provide an offshore marine element as the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) for UNOSOM II, but the French in particular objected that any employment of such a force would be slowed because it required authorization from CENTCOM. However, the Clinton administration

had already decided to restrict American forces ashore during UNOSOM II to some 4,200 troops, many of them providing logistical support to the entire effort. Moreover, the relative quiet in the capital helped convince CENTCOM that mechanized units were inappropriate there.[28] Therefore, only a light infantry task force of the 10th Mountain Division, with helicopter support, remained from May onward as the QRF.

Overall, both the headquarters and combat elements of UNOSOM II were significantly less capable than their counterparts in UNITAF, yet the renewed UN effort had a considerably broader mandate. The UNOSOM II mission included advancing humanitarian aid, economic assistance, and political reconciliation.

UN civilian and military authorities anticipated that Aideed would challenge these efforts rather than agree to share power. Howe's UN staff continued efforts, begun under Oakley, to build government from the bottom up, encouraging local councils of elders whose legitimacy challenged Aideed and Ali Mahdi. Fifty such councils with some public health and education services developed in various parts of the stricken country.[29]

In contrast to the neutrality of UNITAF in Somali politics, UNOSOM II leaders were increasingly antagonistic toward the warlords. Nor was Aideed blameless in this regard—he had surreptitiously moved many technical trucks back into the capital while "Radio Aideed" spewed criticism and lies against the UN.[30]

Yet the principal UNOSOM element in Mogadishu, the Pakistanis, cut back their patrols for lack of equipment and asked the United States for armored vehicles. Under UNITAF, the United States had already set a precedent in this regard. A 1985 US law forbade giving military aid to Pakistan until the president could certify that Pakistan was not developing nuclear weapons. To circumvent this limitation, the US administration had leased trucks and other equipment to the UN, which then issued them to the Pakistanis.[31] Now, under UNOSOM II, General Montgomery obtained seventy-two M-113 armored personnel carriers and a few M-48 series tanks from NATO stocks to lend to the Pakistani brigade, but the process took time. In the interim, the shortage of patrols reinforced local perceptions that UNOSOM was weak and irresolute. Moreover, this precedent later prompted Egypt to ask for one hundred M-113s in return for increasing its troop levels in Somalia.[32]

The tension between peacekeepers and clans came to a head on June 5, 1993, one month after UNITAF departed. Without prior notice, Pakistani troops visited two cantonments where heavy weapons were supposedly stored. Not only were many of the weapons missing, but one of the sites was adjacent to Radio Aideed. The inspections prompted the warlord to fear an attempt to capture

the station. Although the inspections were relatively peaceful, two different Pakistani units were ambushed as they returned to their bases. Armed SNA militiamen fired from behind rock-throwing women and children, making it impossible for the Pakistanis to return fire without inflicting civilian casualties. Eventually, the American QRF and an Italian mechanized unit arrived to end the fighting, but twenty-four Pakistani soldiers were dead and forty-four wounded.[33]

This attack ended any semblance of UNOSOM political neutrality. On the following day, the Security Council issued UNSCR 837, which called for "all necessary measures against all those responsible for the armed attacks," specifically the USC/SNA, and condemned Radio Aideed broadcasts.[34] The Clinton administration supported this radical change in mission, yet the interagency deputies committee and other groups apparently did not recognize the increasing lethality and seriousness of the conflict.

UNOSOM II leaders developed a kind of tunnel vision, focusing almost exclusively on their opponents in Mogadishu. The American QRF, which originally had significant restrictions on its use, now began a series of raids against USC/SNA. On June 17, the Moroccan battalion commander and several of his troops became casualties in a south Mogadishu firefight. Admiral Howe responded by offering a $25,000 reward for the apprehension of Aideed. Three weeks later, the SNA ambushed Italian troops, killing three and wounding twenty-one. The admiral had already requested a tank company, more armored personnel carriers, AC-130 gunships, and A-10s. Yet Defense Secretary Aspin did not consider armor or A-10 support appropriate in the situation, and the AC-130s were eventually withdrawn.[35]

Governments that had provided troops for a peacekeeping role were unprepared for the increased risks of open combat and began to place restrictions (later famous in Afghanistan as "caveats") on the employment of their troops, some of which refused to obey Bir's orders. The French contingent departed Mogadishu to return to its inland base at Baidoa. Other nations put limits on which armies they were willing to work with. Perhaps the most dangerous case involved Italian general Bruno Loi, who reportedly negotiated with Aideed to give his militiamen safe passage and information about upcoming operations. Loi eventually declined to support other nations without explicit permission from Rome. The Italian government refused to relieve him even when Undersecretary-General Kofi Annan called for his replacement.[36]

American forces had their own problems. Somali opponents learned to assemble rapidly at the sites of raids, producing situations in which the QRF was barely able to complete its mission and break contact before being overwhelmed. International press criticized UNOSOM operations, while the SNA

continued to claim exaggerated numbers of civilian casualties inflicted by these operations. After one such engagement on July 12, a vengeful mob murdered four journalists.[37]

During August, two separate command-detonated mines caused American casualties. After the second incident, Generals Powell and Hoar reluctantly agreed to the dispatch of a special operations force, Task Force Ranger, to hunt for Aideed and other SNA leaders. This group was a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) that included special operators from the various armed forces (SEALs, Delta, combat controllers, and pararescue) as well as one company of 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, and special operations helicopters. Now the United States joined the round of national caveats: Task Force Ranger was independent not only of UNOSOM II but even of General Montgomery's USFORSOM. The task force commander, Maj. Gen. William Garrison, reported to CENTCOM rather than any UN organization. Chasing ephemeral reports of SNA locations and fearing security breaches, this JSOTF only informed Montgomery's staff a few minutes before each operation. Even the Ranger liaison assigned to USFORCOM did not have complete details of each raid. Montgomery did his best to cooperate with the short-notice events, but the high risks of operating in Mogadishu were exacerbated by the lack of prior coordination. Without the AC-130 support typical of special operations attacks, Task Force Ranger relied for both transport and fire support on helicopters flying at very low altitudes over a city crammed with rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). Mujahideen veterans of the Soviet-Afghan conflict reportedly gave the Somalis information about engaging aircraft. In the event of a problem, the lightly equipped QRF would be hard-pressed to extract isolated special operations personnel.[38]

Ali Mahdi and other clan leaders rallied opponents of the SNA and nominally supported UN efforts at reconciliation. On September 22, UNSCR 865 commended Admiral Howe and the UNOSOM II effort while pushing forward with efforts to establish police, courts, and popular elections.[39] For much of the population, however, Aideed was a legendary hero who inspired widespread support by defying the United States.[40] He gained even more prestige on September 25, when an RPG brought down a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter, killing all three aboard.

Defeat and Response

On October 3, 1993, General Garrison received a short-notice report of USC/SNA leaders meeting in a building near the Bakaara Market, an area where UN troops rarely ventured. The timing of a raid on this site at 3:30 p.m. made it unexpected, but by attacking in daylight the Americans sacrificed their advantage

in night vision devices and made the special operation helicopters easier to acquire and engage. This was especially true when the helicopters hovered while troops rappelled down onto the objective; one soldier was injured in the process, and soon thereafter an RPG struck a grounded helicopter nearby. In the confused efforts to evacuate wounded and recover equipment, a second MH-60 Blackhawk was downed a mile away from the first. AH-6/MH-6 "Little Bird" gunships flew in relays over the sites to hold off attackers while Garrison and Montgomery tried to find a solution.[41]

Prodigies of valor did not change the fact that helicopters and High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWVs), or Humvees, were highly vulnerable to RPGs and automatic weapons. Several relief efforts had to turn back. The Italian mechanized infantry again waited to get clearance from its national government, as did the Indian tanks in the force. That evening, most of 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry (the QRF), as well as Rangers and other volunteers assembled a convoy, borrowing wheeled Condor armored personnel carriers (APCs) and their drivers from the Malaysian battalion. Pakistani tanks and APCs also cooperated, but differences in doctrine meant that these vehicles did not move at the same pace as the Americans in the convoy. The relief column finally reached the crash site just before 2:00 a.m. on October 4 but had to spend three more hours recovering casualties and equipment. This delay permitted the Somalis to concentrate militiamen who further impeded the withdrawal.

Ultimately, 18 American, 1 Pakistani, and 1 Malaysian soldier died with 73, 2, and 7 wounded, respectively. An American pilot and a Nigerian soldier were captured. Four Condors were destroyed in addition to the two helicopters. While no accurate count of Somali casualties is possible, estimates ran from several hundred to more than a thousand; whatever the true number, their losses shocked even Aideed's supporters.

As Robert Baumann observed, the Clinton administration's response to the October 3–4 battle "epitomized its conflicted view of using military force."[42] The shock of this sudden defeat with its image of Americans dragged through the streets prompted public outrage, and the administration concluded that military force was a failure in Somalia. Moreover, despite its own responsibility for creating a fragmented triple chain of command (UNOSOM II, USFORSOM, and TF Ranger), the administration focused its recriminations on the fragmented UN command structure.

These ideas were reflected in Washington's response. While determined to withdraw, the administration conceded CINCCENT General Hoar's argument that immediate evacuation would be a humiliating admission of defeat. Instead, the administration decided to withdraw by March 31, 1994, while making no reference to TF Ranger in its announcements. In the interim, the US created

yet another "stovepipe" command, Joint Task Force Somalia, which it insisted would be solely under US control, again reporting to CENTCOM rather than UNOSOM II. Army major general Carl Ernst became the commander, with marine brigadier general Peter Pace, a future chairman of the Joint Chiefs, as his deputy. While Montgomery's USFORSOM remained nominally in place, Ernst absorbed many of the troops assigned to that headquarters as well as a smaller special operations element that remained after TF Ranger departed.[43]

The desire to respond with a show of force had to be balanced against the knowledge that all troops brought into Somalia would have to be withdrawn in the near future. AC-130 gunships returned to the country, and on October 10 they devastated a weapons storage area north of the capital. Task Force 1-64 gave JTF Somalia the armored capability that its predecessor had lacked, with one company arriving by airlift and the rest by sea. In addition to the belated arrival of an army artillery battery, Ernst got Q36 counterbattery radars that helped him pinpoint and destroy Somalis engaged in harassing fire against American positions.[44]

Yet Ernst had to argue to get sufficient staff officers for planning, as well as a PSYOP company (–) to influence Somali perceptions. The CIA station chief provided human intelligence information based on an informal agreement. Similarly, because he had only limited control over the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit offshore, Ernst made a "handshake" agreement that the marines would conduct "training" that involved keeping a battalion command post, two rifle companies, and artillery ashore almost constantly. Ernst also developed a set of escalating responses to any threat from two naval aircraft overhead up to an air assault infantry company supported by AC-130s.[45]

All of this, however, was intended purely as a show of force; JTF Somalia no longer sought to apprehend Aideed, nor did it provide significant support to NGOs. The JTF could assist UNOSOM II in planning operations and reopening major routes within the city, but not in leading UN operations. The focus was entirely on force protection to prevent further losses, although General Ernst defined this as aggressive preparation rather than passive defense. Artillery pieces were airlifted to various sites in the city, while USAF and Navy airpower overflights and a parade of warships sent a clear message. In connection with this, Ernst urged his subordinates to practice interservice cooperation such as army helicopters providing laser designation for marine Hellfire missiles.[46]

JTF Somalia conducted several carefully coordinated operations to increase security and provide medical and dental care as well as food to the local populace. However, both UNOSOM II and CENTCOM headquarters became concerned by the provocative nature of Ernst's next plan: he proposed to clear obstacles along the 21 October Road, a major artery in the northern part of

the city that ran roughly northeast–southwest. A Pakistani battalion with US engineers would make the main effort, backed by precision-guided missiles and American infantry. Because the plan involved UN troops, General Bir vetoed it.[47]

While these military developments were underway, the political situation continued to deteriorate in Somalia. Ambassador Oakley made repeated visits to negotiate the release of the American and Nigerian prisoners. The Security Council suspended the call for Aideed's arrest, UNOSOM II professed to be neutral in Somali politics, and General Bir was eventually replaced. Although the heavy Somali casualties of October 3–4 had rocked Aideed and his followers, he held on and soon claimed, like Saddam in 1991, that he had won the contest with the United States. The SNA demanded dissolution of all local councils.[48]

Once Washington demonstrated its determination to withdraw by the end of March, most other contributors followed suit. In December 1993, the Malaysian battalion assumed the QRF mission from the US Army. On March 4, a Marine unit relieved the remaining Army task force, and all American troop units departed by March 25. In addition to the 68 UN dead and 262 wounded during the previous year, a further 5 Nepalese peacekeepers died later in 1994. Technicals returned to the streets of Mogadishu by July. Bowing to the inevitable, the UN decided to reduce UNOSOM forces at that time, and the US Liaison Office, with its marine guard force, evacuated in September.[49]

Military leaders had embraced the Weinberger Doctrine in large measure because the standard of using overwhelming force to achieve clearly defined objectives seemed to avoid the type of vague, open-ended commitments epitomized in Vietnam (1959–73) and Beirut (1982–83). In keeping with this doctrine, UNITAF (1992–93) chose a self-imposed mission that sought short-term relief for the humanitarian disaster in Somalia without becoming involved in the complexities of rebuilding a society and government. Even under UNITAF, however, achieving these limited objectives required a broad range of diplomatic, military, and economic actions. Security forces could create the preconditions for national revival but could not by themselves achieve lasting change. Once the United States reduced its massive forces and returned the situation to UN control during UNOSOM II, it was obvious that more extensive actions were essential to continue the temporary stability that UNITAF had created.

One can debate whether the United Nations should have taken sides in the Somali civil conflict in order to build a Western-style democracy. In retrospect, the UN's efforts to graft democracy onto Somalia's clan-based culture are an eerie forerunner of similar efforts in Haiti, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Yet *any* UN solution to that failed state meant that UNITAF and UNOSOM II would

have to go well beyond imposing a temporary ceasefire. Thus, the accusation of "mission creep" is erroneous insofar as it implies that mismanagement had allowed the American and UN goals in Somalia to escape from the clearly defined, achievable goals of the Weinberger Doctrine.

Regardless of that doctrine, the Somalia experience reinforced the Clinton administration's skepticism, based on experiences such as Vietnam, about the utility of military force in ill-defined situations. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke later described this reluctance as the "Vietmalia Syndrome," and it strongly influenced American national security policy for the remainder of the decade.[50]

If Clinton was reluctant to commit military force, Somalia made him even more unlikely to cede control of that force to the UN. In May 1994, Presidential Decision Directive 25 attempted to codify the administration's objections to the way the UN conducted peacekeeping. The document insisted that the UN needed both an expanded staff and improved command and control to operate such efforts. Alternatively, the directive suggested that NATO or unilateral American action would be more effective and twice asserted that, even when the United States supports peacekeeping efforts, the president never relinquishes command of US forces.[51]

Haiti

The prolonged humanitarian crisis in Haiti, which overlapped the Somalia debacle, further reinforced the Clinton administration's ambivalence about the use of force.

As early as 1685, the French colonial Black Code distinguished between "Christian" blacks born in Haiti and African-born slaves; subsequent policies helped create a privileged class of mixed-race residents. Even after a slave rebellion broke free from French rule, Haiti was plagued by a racial caste system, impoverished population, and government instability. By the late twentieth century, up to 40 percent of Haitians had no rights as citizens because they were not registered as such.[52] Regardless of who nominally ruled in Port-au-Prince, the wealthy minority controlled policies. Between 1843 and 1915, there were twenty-two Haitian heads of state, of whom fourteen were deposed by revolt and only one completed a full term of office. The occasional democratically elected governments had no tradition of compromise between factions, resulting in frequent dissolutions of parliament and other government irregularities.[53]

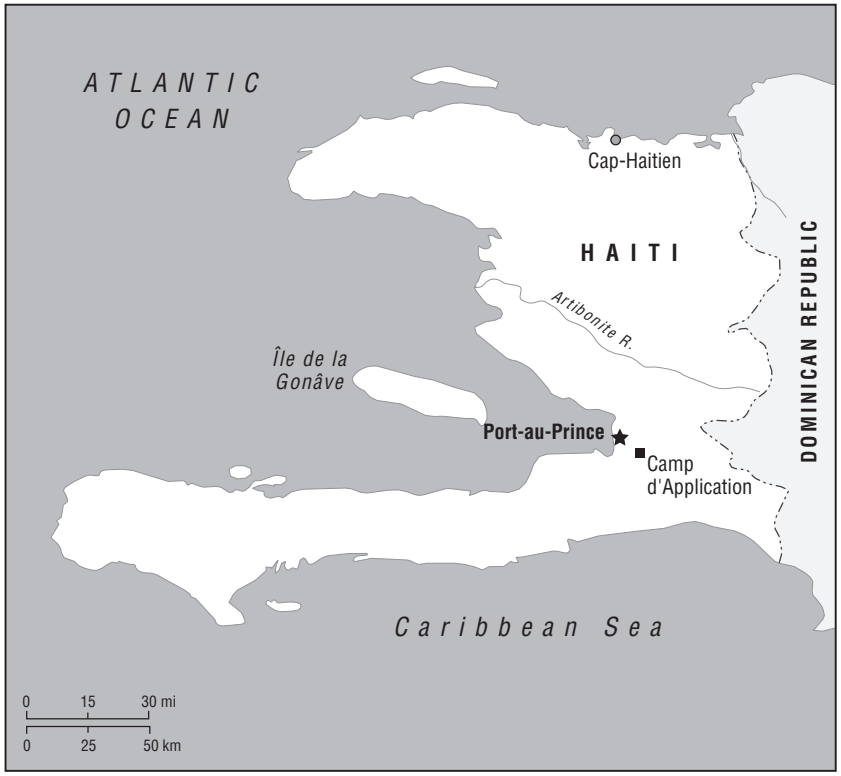
In 1914, the opening of the Panama Canal made control of Haiti more important strategically, leading to the US Marine Corps occupation of the island nation from 1915 to 1934. The marines maintained order and facilitated American business interests there but enforced Jim Crow standards and suppressed

opposition with considerable brutality. Moreover, just as in Panama, the marines created a local paramilitary group, in this case the Garde d'Haiti (later expanded into the Forces Armées d'Haïti, FAd'H), that could dictate the government of the state. During the same time period, the USMC created a similar armed force in the neighboring Dominican Republic; regardless of their political leadership, the two armies often cooperated. In 1937, for example, the Dominican armed forces massacred several hundred Haitian political exiles.[54]

From 1957 until his death in 1971, François "Papa Doc" Duvalier ruled Haiti, posing as a friend of the poor while organizing the thuggish Tonton Macoute (later redesignated Volontaires de la Sécurité Nationale). The Macoute, along with the section chiefs who controlled rural Haiti, used violence to eliminate or intimidate any opposition.[55] Duvalier's son continued the dictatorship for a further fifteen years, followed by a series of short-lived democratic governments and military coups. Although the Macoute officially disbanded in 1986, its members reemerged as leaders of later political repression movements.

A prolonged struggle between wealthy classes and populists culminated on September 30, 1991, in a new military coup led by Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras that overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a populist who had been elected by promising increased wages and social equality. Seeking to evade international sanctions, Cedras and his supporters negotiated in bad faith with Dante Caputo, the special representative of both the UN and Organization of American States, concerning restoring Aristide to power.[56] Meanwhile, the de facto regime, apparently with the support of the US defense attaché, formed a new group of paramilitary thugs, the Front por l'Avancement de la Progrès Haitien (Front for the Advancement of Haitian Progress, FRAPH). This group, including veterans of previous organizations such as the Macoute, aided official government elements in murdering at least 4,000 Haitian supporters of Aristide, motivated many more to flee the country in boats.[57]

Successive administrations in Washington often misunderstood the Haitian situation, with a subconscious racial bias that doubted whether even Aristide was capable of effective self-government.[58] Presidents Bush and Clinton were primarily concerned with restoring stability to the devastated country, with democracy a lower priority.[59] Clinton was also hampered by two factors of practical politics. First, even before the "Blackhawk Down" incident, domestic public opinion was loath to support the deployment of American troops into ill-defined situations such as that in Haiti. Second, throughout the 1980s and 1990s the American public objected strongly to an influx of immigrant "boat people," whether from Cuba or Haiti. The Clinton administration, following patterns established under Reagan, intercepted these refugees, moving them first to Guantanamo and then back to Haiti. The exiled president Aristide was



Haiti. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

outraged by the way his supporters were being returned to the clutches of their opponents. Describing the American policy as racist, he eventually pressured the administration into recognizing the refugees as asylum seekers.[60] In the long run the refugee question, for which there was no policy that would satisfy everyone, contributed to Clinton's decision to intervene.

In the interim, however, Washington tried various nonmilitary levers to resolve the Haitian situation. On June 16, 1993, UNSCR 841 embargoed petroleum products from Haiti.[61] This finally pushed Cedras to negotiate, although he still failed to meet face-to-face with Aristide. The resulting Governors Island Agreement of July 3, 1993, promised to restore Aristide to power over a four-month period by appointing a new prime minister and police force, granting an amnesty to the rebels, and permitting Cedras to retire.[62]

The agreement was stillborn. Aristide's opponents physically attacked his supporters, including Aristide's justice minister who had returned to prepare for the transfer of power. Meanwhile, the United States formed Combined/

Joint Task Force Haiti Assistance Group (JTF HAG), a collection of some 600 US and 110 Canadian soldiers. In addition to communications and other support elements, the Americans were drawn from 3rd Special Forces Group, 96th Civil Affairs Battalion, and 9th Psychological Operations Battalion. Their designated role was to assist in implementing the Governors Island Agreement by helping to professionalize the FAd'H and a new police force. Members of the junta, however, claimed to be insulted by the idea that they were not already professional and began to organize public opposition to the foreigners. The PSYOP unit was supposed to move into Haiti to counter junta propaganda, but Defense Secretary Aspin delayed their deployment, apparently concerned about the appearance of Americans conducting information operations.[63]

This was the background for the arrival of the USS *Harlan County*, a Landing Ship, Tank (LST), at Port-au-Prince about 2:00 a.m. on Monday, October 11, 1993. The *Harlan County* was one of two LSTs transporting JTF HAG as well as some navy construction engineers and a USMC platoon. Haitian authorities had already moored vessels so as to almost block the ship's approach while prevaricating about use of a wharf for unloading. At daylight, a rowdy crowd, instigated by the junta, appeared near the wharf with signs that invoked the recent defeat in Mogadishu.

The traditional image of this confrontation is that the LST was completely defenseless because the Clinton administration had planned only for a permissive landing based on the Governors Island Agreement. In reality, the *Harlan County* might have prevailed, but only at unacceptable political cost. The marines on board had already put on UN patches and blue berets, so any action they might take to disperse the crowd would cause enormous diplomatic problems with the UN. The captain of the LST, Cmdr. Marvin E. Butcher, ostentatiously manned his caliber .50 machine guns and deployed snipers on deck while announcing, over a telephone call that he believed would be intercepted, that he would destroy any vessel that approached him. Several small boats belonging to the FAd'H promptly backed off. In the absence of clear guidance from Atlantic Command headquarters in Norfolk, Butcher correctly concluded that he would be unable to land the JTF. He told Norfolk he was weighing anchor and withdrawing, and belatedly received approval for the withdrawal.[64]

Regardless of the reality on the scene, the public perception of this withdrawal was that the United States had backed down from a confrontation. Cedras and his junta had won the confrontation, but that humiliation started the process that eventually led to the overwhelming American occupation of Haiti.

The immediate response to the *Harlan County* came when, as authorized by the Security Council, the United States reimposed a naval blockade on Haiti.

While humanitarian items such as cooking oil were exempt, the blockade otherwise aimed to prevent importation of petroleum and other products. Joint Task Force 120 included not only nine Navy and Coast Guard ships to search vessels bound for or departing Haiti but also SEALs and other special operations elements to stop small boats smuggling gasoline. JTF 120 also continued the interception of Haitian boat people, collecting up to six hundred a day, while planning for a possible noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) in Haiti.[65]

A Plethora of Plans

While diplomacy vainly tried to resolve the issue, military headquarters developed plans for an intervention that they were reluctant to implement.

Adm. Paul D. Miller, commander in chief, United States Atlantic Command (USACOM), and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic, was the officer responsible for military operations in the Caribbean islands including Haiti. In a service often dominated by academy graduates, Miller had attended Florida State University and the University of Georgia and was commissioned from officer candidate school. Miller actively sought innovations, including the use of attack aircraft carriers as mobile airfields for the other services.[66]

Maj. Gen. Michel J. Byron, USMC, the USACOM J-5 (Plans and Policy), began preparing for a Haitian intervention by modifying an existing NEO concept (outline) plan labeled Jade Green. To flesh out such a concept, USACOM needed a full planning staff for a major ground operation. Typically, the Defense Department would allocate XVIII Airborne Corps to plan and potentially conduct such an operation within the Atlantic Command area. The corps commander, Lt. Gen. H. Hugh Shelton, took his guidance from Admiral Miller to produce the invasion plan. A small cell of planners at the airborne corps headquarters and in the 82nd Airborne Division then developed what became Operations Plan 2370 to seize control of Haiti. Not surprisingly, OPLAN 2370 closely resembled the 1989 invasion of Panama. A sudden, massive assault by special operations and airborne units would neutralize the FAd'H and take control of key population centers, preempting any chance for defense. Eight battalions of the 82nd Airborne were to descend at night on the island nation: five in Port-au-Prince, two more north of the capital, and one at Cap-Haitien, a port city and airport on the northern coast. Some fifty helicopters from the 82nd, prepositioned on the island of Great Inagua northwest of Haiti, would support the invasion. Simultaneously, a Joint Special Operations Task Force would seize key points in Port-au-Prince, the international airport, and the nearby Camp d'Application, where FAd'H crew-served weapons were concentrated. MH-60 helicopters would transport 265 Rangers from Guantanamo

Bay to the Camp d'Application, with other helicopters lifting forty-five SEALs to eliminate the Haitian police company that controlled access to the National Palace. Another 445 Rangers would parachute to seize a deserted field west of the capital to use as a forward operating base. In addition to the JSOTF, XVIII Airborne Corps headquarters was to function as Joint Task Force 180. Below that level, the 82nd headquarters would act as the army force headquarters for this operation, while Twelfth Air Force coordinated the detailed deployment and air support as the air force element.[67]

As the probable invasion date approached, Admiral Miller added another element, Special Marine Air/Ground Task Force Caribbean (22nd Marine Regiment), while reducing the airborne drop from eight battalions to five. Army planners suspected that this decision reflected an underestimation of the combat power of airborne infantry battalions in comparison to marines. In July 1994, General Shelton convinced Miller that inserting this Marine element into the Port-au-Prince area would add risk and confusion to an already complicated assault plan; the admiral recognized this argument but still wanted to use marines unless the plan had to be executed in a very short time frame. Ultimately, the marine element, as part of the Naval Force for the operation, was assigned to Cap-Haitien in the northern portion of the country.[68]

Modeled on Operation Just Cause, OPLAN 2370 envisioned a forcible entry in which the entire invasion, from alerting forces to final withdrawal, would be as brief as twenty-four days, although that figure was later stretched to forty-five days. Beginning in June 1994, however, first USACOM and then the Joint Chiefs of Staff instructed XVIII Airborne Corps to develop another plan based on a more permissive entry into Haiti. This concept, eventually fleshed out to become OPLAN 2380, envisioned a significantly longer occupation period (five and a half months) in-country before it would transfer responsibility to a UN Mission in Haiti (UNMIH). Without the requirement for forced entry, XVIII Airborne Corps headquarters assigned most of the responsibility for 2380 to the 10th Mountain Division. In the absence of parachute airlift, however, OPLAN 2380 involved one of Admiral Miller's most daring innovations: the use of an attack aircraft carrier as the starting point for 10th Mountain helicopters to land troops in Haiti. Augmented with multinational forces, the division headquarters would become Combined and Joint Task Force (CJTF) 190.[69] On the one hand, the mountain division, having just completed a similar mission in Somalia, had significant experience, for its level, in such operations. On the other hand, peacetime personnel policies meant that some of that expertise rotated out of Fort Drum before the division actually deployed again. Moreover, the political and security environment in Haiti proved to be significantly different from that in Somalia.

Development of these two plans continued for much of 1994 while the likelihood of actual execution ebbed and flowed. JTF 180 and the JSOTF activated and prepared to enter Haiti during April, but both task forces had stood down by late May. In a vain effort to reduce smuggling from the Dominican Republic, the 3rd Battalion, 9th Infantry, of 7th Infantry Division (Light) provided the framework for a multinational Military Observer Group along the Haitian-Dominican border, but no sooner had it deployed to the Dominican Republic than it was disbanded on September 26. Finally, to provide a veneer of international support, Washington sought token contributions from as many other governments as possible, under what became known as Caribbean Command, or CARICOM. In July 1994, USACOM conferred with military representatives of the Caribbean states—Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, the Bahamas, Belize, Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda—each of whom agreed to contribute one platoon.[70]

Perhaps the most serious weakness in all this planning was the inadequate nature of interagency coordination. Defense Secretary William Perry and JCS Chairman John Shalikashvili opposed any military intervention on principle and (based on the Somalia experience) were particularly reluctant to have the Defense Department involved in anything resembling "nation building" in Haiti. In addition, USACOM and XVIII Airborne Corps understandably tried to maintain operations security by minimizing distribution of their detailed plans. The net result was that, when the intervention actually occurred, military planners suddenly revealed significant requirements for support from other agencies to complete the task. This was particularly true concerning the requirement to rebuild the Haitian police force. Neither the Justice Department nor other civilian agencies had a surge capacity to rapidly deploy experts overseas, and what personnel they did possess had no procedure to gain insertion into the military airlift process in order to reach the country.[71]

Shifting Gears

By the end of August, the political future of Haiti remained in flux, but the JCS concluded that military resistance to the intervention might be significantly less than originally expected. Based on this guidance, Admiral Miller's USACOM staff told XVIII Airborne Corps to plan a third option, somewhere between the violent takedown of OPLAN 2370 and the permissive deployment of OPLAN 2380. General Shelton had already suggested that concept in July, but now the corps and mountain division staffs had to generate this compromise third option, appropriately labeled OPLAN 2375, in a last-minute rush. In effect, 2375 called for JTF 180 to conduct a forced entry for approximately forty-eight hours and then hand over implementation to a subordinate JTF 190

to conduct a form of peacekeeping. This concept involved a significant risk of confused command channels, especially for the special operations forces trying to preempt any Haitian resistance.[72]

Visible American signals such as the military observer group in the Dominican Republic belatedly convinced the junta leaders in Haiti that the United States would, in fact, overthrow them in the near future. Seeking a soft landing, in mid-September that junta stole a march on Washington by inviting former president Jimmy Carter to mediate the dispute. At the time, this invitation appeared to be a delaying tactic, but Clinton felt that he must support the effort to prove that every peaceful avenue had been exhausted before using force. The sitting president reluctantly agreed to a mission that included not only Mr. Carter but also retired general Colin Powell and Senator Sam Nunn. After excruciating delays, on September 18, 1994, the puppet president of Haiti signed an agreement with the former president by which "certain military officers of the Haitian armed forces" agreed to retire with an amnesty for their actions, while the FAd'H cooperated with the US military to restore order.[73]

Nine days earlier, Defense Secretary Perry had ordered the activation of the various elements involved in the three plans for Haiti. Acting as JTF 180, a modified version of the XVIII Airborne Corps staff boarded the command-and-control ship USS *Mount Whitney.* The 10th Mountain/JTF 190 and JSOTF began to board two aircraft carriers, the USS *Eisenhower* and USS *America*, to accommodate the large number of helicopters involved in their operations. On September 11, defense planners belatedly briefed their counterparts in other agencies on the details of the operation; it is perhaps not a coincidence that large portions of the military plans promptly leaked to the press.[74] However, the leaks probably helped motivate the junta offer to negotiate.

On the evening of September 18, 1994, the first lift of paratroopers had already taken off from North Carolina, and Rangers were about to join the airflow from Georgia. Admiral Miller was unable to get authorization from the JCS to terminate the operation, so at 7:47 p.m. he issued a message doing so on his own authority. None of the existing operations plans envisioned having to cooperate with the military regime the planners had intended to defeat. Now, General Shelton had to meet personally with Cedras the next morning despite the continuing possibility that the junta would again renege on its promises. The staff of JTF 180 improvised a fragmentary order, informally referred to as "2380-Plus," to overawe the Haitians by the early arrival of massive force. Shelton approved this change at 3:00 a.m. on the 19th. Six hours later, 10th Mountain Division troops air-assaulted from the deck of the USS *Eisenhower* into the capital city to be met only by television cameras.[75] Only major improvisations at the last minute made this bloodless conclusion possible. To cite one

obvious example, the cancellation of the airborne assault meant that the entire Time-Phased Force and Deployment List (TPFDL), the detailed computer plan for air movement, had to be scrapped, with all subsequent deployments being improvised.[76]

Not only the troops but the native population itself was uncertain about the situation. To avoid chaos, General Shelton concluded that he had to retain at least part of the FAd'H, the only functioning governmental organization, while reforming it incrementally. To this end, the JTF commander negotiated a deal by which Cedras turned over command to another general who in turn promoted officers acceptable to President Aristide. Still, the apparent cooperation of the invaders with corrupt police and FAd'H soldiers disappointed many Haitians and tended to discredit the entire effort.

On September 24, a deadly misunderstanding in Cap-Haitien unintentionally broke the logjam. As a marine patrol approached the police station in that city, local troops made what appeared to be hostile gestures, and the marines opened fire, killing ten of the FAd'H soldiers without friendly casualties. Haitians interpreted this as an overthrow of the tyrants and apparently expected the American troops to stand aside while they inflicted retribution. However, when the populace began to loot other police stations, 10th Mountain troops flooded the city streets with patrols to restore order. Relations between the occupiers and the remaining local troops were understandably strained, but the menace posed by the previous regime was broken.[77]

Police and the "Rule of Law"

Just as in Somalia, the American intervention in Haiti overawed potential armed opponents but could not ensure law and order on a retail basis. The UN also repeated its failures from Somalia: it attempted to transfer and impose norms of government behavior that were foreign to the culture where those norms were intended to take root. Without using value-laden terms such as "primitive" and "backward," Haitian culture was massively *different* from that of the foreigners who attempted to help the local people. Haitians' expectations about government were based on pre-Enlightenment concepts: courts and police forces existed not to provide equitable treatment under law but to impose the ruler's will on the populace. For many Haitians, the ability of a local official to summon local or US troops established his authority over local opponents, regardless of whether that official had sensible policies. Without the concept of due process, being arrested was functionally the same as being guilty of supporting the Cedras regime, which inspired local reprisals against suspects who were sometimes innocent. Similarly, prisons existed to *punish* inmates who had transgressed against the government rather than to *correct* antisocial behavior.[78]

The initial wave of troops deployed for Operation Uphold Democracy lacked the mission as well as the language skills to provide true police functions in the urban areas of Haiti. The armed services had few soldiers who could speak Creole, and the populace perceived those who did speak it as biased. Yet, the unreformed FAd'H troops continued their arbitrary behavior, even beating civilians in full view of TV cameras. This prompted deployment of much of the 16th Military Police Brigade from Fort Bragg, pending the arrival of civilian contractors to train a new peace force.[79]

Despite the continuing language barrier, the MPs did yeoman service in the first weeks of the operation, although the infantry units of 10th Mountain Division, focused on searching for hidden weapons, often alienated the local populace while failing to coordinate their activities with the MPs in Port-au-Prince.[80]

After considerable delay, Raymond Kelly became the UNMIH's director of international police monitors, a collection of civilian experts who tried to build an effective civilian force. Kelly had recently retired after a career that culminated as New York City commissioner of police; he was also a Vietnam veteran and colonel in the USMC Reserve. Despite such a résumé, the Haiti situation eventually eluded him, and in 1995 another UN-sponsored civilian police effort replaced the monitors.

Even before Kelly arrived, JTF 180 had negotiated with the Aristide government to form an Interim Public Security Force (IPSF) by vetting individual members of the FAd'H, rejecting 4,000 of the 7,000 soldiers. Successful candidates were supposed to receive six days of training, then be put on the streets as policemen. As the situation permitted, police recruits would eventually undergo a more complete police academy training, eight weeks in Haiti and eight more in the United States. At best, however, the IPSF lacked arms, communications, credibility, and experience.[81]

More than that, Haitian factions actively sabotaged efforts to build an independent justice system, a concept they neither embraced nor understood. Even before the junta overthrew him, Aristide had pressured a judge into giving an excessive sentence to an opponent. Aristide's political organization, Lavalas (flood or torrent), circumvented the vetting process to place its supporters in the IPSF, leaving qualified candidates unemployed. Similarly, Lavalas followers acting as voter registrars reportedly raised various obstacles to registration of the populace.[82] Such tactics undoubtedly contributed to a general perception that elections were rigged, a perception that in turn caused a sharp reduction in voter turnout; in April 1997, fewer than 5 percent of voters appeared for local and senatorial elections. The international intervention had restored the form but not the reality of democracy.[83]

One might argue that Aristide could not afford to be idealistic when his opponents used similar measures to undermine him. His supporters complained that the US, Canadian, and other international police monitors rejected Aristide-backed candidates for the new police force, preferring to appoint ex-soldiers whose previous experience in turn often led to rapid promotion in the new force. Defeated in a 1996 election, Aristide was reelected president in November 2000, only to face a mutiny organized by senior police officers who had previously been in the FAd'H. Throughout this period, those FAd'H members who did not gain positions in the IPSF or its successors continued their involvement in the drug trade and other criminal activities.[84] Haiti's society remained largely impervious to well-intentioned efforts to change it.

Special Operations Forces in Haiti

Based in part on its experiences in Somalia, the 10th Mountain Division routinely emphasized force protection, seeking to minimize exposure of its soldiers. Even the physical appearance of such troops, wearing helmets, body armor, and full equipment, appeared to many Haitians to convey an attitude of mistrust toward the local people and an attempt to remain aloof from their concerns.

As commander of the Multi-National Force (MNF), General Shelton expressed concern about this perception, and the division commander, Maj. Gen. David Meade, recognized the negative effects of this posture but felt it necessary to protect the troops. He agreed with Brig. Gen. Richard Potter, commander of the Army Special Operations Task Force, that special operators in the Haitian hinterland should attempt a more traditional, "hearts and minds" relationship with the populace, an approach symbolized by wearing "soft caps" rather than Kevlar helmets. This difference in approach caused friction when Special Forces troops encountered 10th Mountain troops in urban areas. That said, on occasion Special Forces officers encountered serious military challenges, but the prompt deployment of Ranger reaction forces usually served to discourage opposition.[85]

The two stepchildren of special operations efforts, PSYOP and Civil Affairs units, again contributed markedly to dealing with the Haitian public. Loudspeakers, printed announcements, and radio broadcasts helped explain MNF actions to the crowds that often gathered around as weapons searches or other military actions were taking place. PSYOP messages also publicized efforts such as a buyback program to get civilians to turn in weapons.[86]

Civil Affairs teams not only advised and worked with the Haitian government at every level but also helped coordinate military and nongovernmental organizations. In this as in all other aspects of the Haitian operation, the last-minute change in plans delayed the deployment and assembly of personnel

in-country. Within a few days, however, JTF 180 and its subordinate organizations had opened two Civil-Military Operations Centers (CMOCs), one in Port-au-Prince and the other in Cap-Haitien. A Humanitarian Affairs Coordination Center (HACC) was associated with each CMOC. The intent was for the HACC to be the interface between the military on the one hand and NGOs and other humanitarian organizations on the other, thereby freeing the CMOCs themselves to do the actual planning and coordination. Given the superb performance of the CMOC in Somalia, however, some experienced NGO field-workers bypassed the HACCs and tried to deal directly with the CMOCs, increasing the miscommunications that inevitably accompany military deployments that include humanitarian missions.[87]

The principal limitation on Civil Affairs efforts, and indeed upon Special Forces effectiveness, was that the leaders involved, from Admiral Miller onward, initially sought to avoid encouraging the Haitian public to expect the United States to undertake major construction projects. The MNF depended on the NGOs to do most of the humanitarian work, but as one staff planner remarked, getting the NGOs to cooperate on specific projects was like "herding turkeys."[88] Each humanitarian organization had its own mission and its own base of support, and at least a few sought to gain publicity through highly visible projects that were not always what the population really needed.

The Defense Department lacked authorization to expend funds for humanitarian efforts, although Admiral Miller did instruct his subordinate headquarters to take emergency actions to restore electric power, clear away garbage, and the like.[89] Yet, many Haitians already had an exaggerated belief in American wealth and capability, so that even emergency repairs to electricity generators and water pumps appeared as harbingers of greater developments in the future. Special Forces troops found creative alternatives to the lack of funding, including voluntary work and tolls to pay for road repairs, but without funds improvements were limited.[90] The only significant changes for the better were the improvement of the power grid and of a few major roads, thanks to an American effort that extended for most of the decade.[91] Otherwise, the combination of failed economic expectations and suspicions that the United States was perpetuating the FAd'H under cover of the IPSF led to disillusionment and disengagement by much of the populace.

Fadeout

At the end of December 1994, the 25th Infantry Division (Light) assumed the mission in Haiti from the 10th Mountain, providing most of the multinational force headquarters as well as the few infantry battalions still deemed necessary. By that time, reserve component Green Berets had replaced most of the 3rd

Special Forces Group. The 25th, like other rotational units, had the advantage of detailed intelligence and lessons learned concerning its new assignment.[92]

On March 31, 1995, the 25th turned over the Haitian mission to the United Nations, with a US general as the first commander of the new mission. In contrast to the hasty turnover of UNITAF to UNOSOM II, two years later, on this occasion the new staff underwent deliberate training on how to function as a UN headquarters. In turn, UNMIH oversaw new legislative elections on June 4. Unfortunately, as noted earlier, President Aristide's supporters predominated on an electoral commission that failed to include certain candidates on the ballots, which prompted widespread protests and mistrust. The United States continued to provide logistical support to the UN in Haiti, although in late 1995 the Clinton administration briefly withdrew even its support force headquarters so that it could declare an end to the operation. Some five hundred support troops returned later, but this withdrawal only confirmed the Haitian public's belief that the Americans were not committed to the effort.[93]

Operation Uphold Democracy reflected the existing American government approach to contingency operations. Military planners and civilian decision-makers agreed on an initial show of force to deter resistance, followed by a brief period of stabilization efforts after which the United States would turn the territory over to a United Nations effort with only limited American support. Both American and UN leaders had attempted to impose representative democracy and the rule of law, only to settle for the much lower goal of reducing starvation and political turmoil. Parallel to Somalia in the past and Iraq in the future, Haiti's local society and culture were far too entrenched to be changed by a deployment operating under such self-imposed limits on time and resources. Haiti descended into a gang environment so lawless that in 2023 the UN voted for another intervention.

Although Uphold Democracy failed to accomplish any long-term change, as a military effort it again displayed the operational mastery achieved by the US armed forces after the end of the Cold War. Military staffs had demonstrated their ability both in deliberate planning and in the improvisational adjustments that are an inevitable part of actually executing those plans. The inflexibility of the Time-Phased Force and Deployment List was again on display, but the operation overcame that inflexibility after a week of confusion.

Eight months after the intervention, the National Defense University hosted a workshop concerning Uphold Democracy. The general conclusion was that the government needed a common doctrine for interagency planning.[94] In 1997, this concern informed Presidential Decision Directive 56, Managing Complex Contingency Operations. This document directed the Deputies Committee, composed of senior executives from a variety of departments and agencies,

to establish an executive committee to steer planning in future situations.[95] Actual doctrine and education in interagency cooperation were still far in the future.

The Lebanese Conundrum

Israel's long struggle with Hezbollah involved more significant national interests and a higher intensity of combat than the challenges in Somalia and Haiti. At the operational level, however, similar issues arose when, once again, a Western democracy that did not understand its foes tried to use advanced technology to resolve an unconventional threat in a manner that proved politically unpopular.

To gain independence from France, in 1943 seventeen confessional groups in Lebanon signed a National Pact to share power, with the presidency allocated to the Maronite Christians, the premiership to the Sunni Muslims, and parliamentary seats divided between these and other groups according to a complex formula. There were periodic breakdowns in this balance, leading to the first American intervention in 1958 and the deployment of Syrian troops in 1976. Even before the Syrians' arrival, however, lack of economic opportunity prompted some Lebanese Shi'ites to emigrate and others to become violent militants.[96]

The 1948 influx of Palestinian refugees added another layer of complexity to Lebanon's polity. Although many refugees remained loyal to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and other groups dedicated to creating a Palestinian state, by the 1980s some Palestinians had abandoned the narrow nationalist cause in favor of the broader Salafist militancy, which argued for a return to the primitive purity of Pan-Arab Islam. Maronite Christians, who saw all Palestinians in Lebanon as a threat to the 1943 pact and to national security, sought to exclude the refugees from citizenship. In this they found themselves temporarily allied with the Syrians, whose occupation of Lebanon was criticized by the PLO. In the late 1970s, the PLO therefore aided Islamists who rebelled against Syrian dictator Hafiz al-Assad; in return, Syria began training the Amal militia of Shi'ites to check the power of the PLO in Lebanon.[97]

The post-1967 growth of Palestinian terrorism was a constant irritant to an otherwise triumphant Israel. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and even more the Tel Aviv government became increasingly frustrated by their inability to stop bombing, hijackings, and cross-border attacks.

In 1978, the IDF attempted to expel the Palestinians from southern Lebanon between the Litani River and the border with Israel, to turn the area into a buffer zone. Maj. Saad Haddad, a Maronite ex-officer of the Lebanese army, led an Israeli-supported militia that developed into the South Lebanon Army (SLA).[98]

Despite the best efforts of the IDF and SLA, however, no purely military approach could solve the political issue of Palestinian territory and rights.

In 1982, Defense Minister (and retired general) Ariel Sharon persuaded the Israeli government to launch a much larger invasion of Lebanon. The advance reached as far north as Beirut, where at Israeli instigation another Maronite militia invaded several refugee camps, massacring at least eight hundred Palestinians, including women and children. The IDF did force much of the PLO leadership to evacuate Lebanon, but overall the incursion only added to the disorder in Lebanon and was followed by suicide bombings against American and French diplomatic and military facilities.[99]

The public relations name given to the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon was Operation Peace for Galilee, but there was no peace for Galilee. Significant factions in Lebanon quietly welcomed the invasion as a means of curbing the PLO. This welcome turned to opposition, however, when the IDF remained to occupy the security zone south of the Litani for two decades. Far from providing security for northern Israel, the continued occupation of this zone radicalized much of the Lebanese population in a manner that produced a greater threat to the Jewish state.

Hezbollah versus the IDF

The primary beneficiary of this antipathy toward Israel was Hezbollah (Party of Allah), a Shi'ite group inspired by Iranian Islamists that received military aid from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and sometimes Syria. Hezbollah's early leaders regarded the United States, France, and Israel as arrogant oppressors and considered the Lebanese government hopelessly corrupt. The group was often at odds with the more moderate Amal militia, to the point of defeating Amal during a low-level armed struggle in the fall of 1988. During that decade, Hezbollah became prominent as a loose association of radicals that kidnapped dozens of Westerners in Lebanon, holding them for ransom that included the release of Iranian assets frozen in the United States. This early reputation caused the IDF to continue regarding Hezbollah as a terrorist organization long after it had morphed into something more threatening.[100]

At the beginning of the 1982 campaign, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) had given an early demonstration of developing sensor and targeting technology, using unmanned aerial vehicles and other innovations to shoot down eighty-two Syrian aircraft and destroy nineteen surface-to-air missile launchers without friendly losses.[101] Given this success, it was natural that, some eighteen months later, the IAF attempted to use deep air strikes as a low-risk way to deter terrorism and encourage moderate groups inside Lebanon. Yet, almost by definition

insurgent groups like Hezbollah lack fixed facilities that offer useful targets for deterrence and retaliation. When Israeli intelligence was unable to identify such sites, the Israeli cabinet chose bombing targets based on its imperfect understanding of Lebanese politics.[102]

Recognizing the failure of massed assaults on IDF and SLA positions, in 1987 Hezbollah turned to roadside improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide bombers. IRGC training enabled the group to shift to larger, more effective operations during the early 1990s. On February 16, 1992, the IAF seized a fleeting intelligence opportunity to kill Hezbollah's secretary-general, Abbas Mussawi, apparently believing that eliminating one leader would disorganize its foe. Unfortunately for Israel, the attack backfired. Not only did the loss cause the organization to redouble its efforts, but Mussawi's successor, Hassan Nasrallah, proved to be an effective organizational leader who accelerated strategic adaptation including improved intelligence, reconnaissance, and operational security. Hezbollah's military leaders became more professional and competent in the process. Shortly after Mussawi's death, the IDF loosened restrictions on targeting for lack of specific intelligence, but Hezbollah responded with what became its most effective tactic, bombarding northern Israel with Katyusha rockets.[103] The 122 mm Katyusha multiple rocket launcher, in this instance usually a Syrian copy of the Soviet BM-13 Grad, was highly inaccurate but could be set up, fired, and displaced so rapidly that targeting it was almost impossible.

This became evident when, in response to a Hezbollah operation that killed seven soldiers, the IDF conducted Operation Accountability (July 25–31, 1993). Air attacks succeeded in the intended goal of forcing the civilian populace of South Lebanon to flee, but Israel had erred in believing that refugees would motivate al-Assad to rein the radicals in. As in so many other instances, one government overestimated the degree of control that a rival government had over another adversary because it wrongly regarded the adversary as a puppet or proxy. Hezbollah actually increased the tempo of rocket attacks into Israel. The United States negotiated a ceasefire based on an unwritten agreement not to target civilians in Lebanon or Israel. However, each side interpreted this agreement for its own convenience, and each wrongly believed that it was deterring the other. Hostilities continued, and in April 1996 the IDF launched air and ground attacks in South Lebanon (Operation Grapes of Wrath), producing a more formal agreement that still favored Hezbollah's insurgent operations. Although it suffered significant losses in these attacks, Hezbollah learned to focus on maintaining both its organizational structure and sustained rocket fire.[104]

An infamous incident during Grapes of Wrath illustrates Israel's difficulties. A Hezbollah mortar team fired on an Israeli unit and then took refuge in

the village of Qana. The same area contained a Fiji battalion that formed part of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), a group of observers and peacekeepers established in 1978. This UNIFIL camp in Qana already contained eight hundred Lebanese who had taken refuge there at the start of the Israeli operation. The IDF unit that had been attacked called in 155 mm artillery fire to protect itself, and some of the shells burst over the UNIFIL camp. This artillery barrage killed some 102 civilians and wounded numerous others; four Fijian soldiers were also wounded. Despite the fact that the Hezbollah fighters were violating international law by hiding among the civilian populace, international opinion widely criticized the Israeli military.[105]

While the struggle with Hezbollah simmered, throughout the 1990s the IDF focused on improved technology and increased professionalism, tending to deemphasize conventional mechanized forces and more generally the citizen-soldier tradition of Israel. The much ballyhooed success of precision-guided munitions and improved sensors in Desert Storm encouraged the investment in technology, paid for by reductions in active-duty strength and reserve training. Just as in the United States, Israeli disapproval of casualties encouraged politicians and commanders to emphasize PGMs instead of ground operations, but collateral casualties caused by the new weapons further antagonized the Lebanese.[106] Responding to the ongoing Palestinian protests of the First (1987–93) and Second (2000–2005) Intifadas also diverted funding and manpower from conventional capabilities. These reallocations of resources seemed to be prudent risks at the time but left many in the IDF unfamiliar with their Shi'a adversary's capabilities.[107] Large-scale maneuvers by Israeli reserve divisions became rare; by the early 2000s, Israeli ground troops (like their American counterparts a few years later) became more skilled at clearing a building of militants than conducting mechanized attacks in the field.

One exception to the trend toward high-technology operations was Maj. Gen. Amiram Levin, who headed Northern Command from 1994 to 1998. Levin recognized that Hezbollah had become a guerrilla army rather than just a terrorist group, although by the time he made this determination Hezbollah was evolving rapidly beyond the guerrilla stage. (During the 1990s, Hezbollah not only grew into a well-trained military force but also became an influential political and social welfare entity in Lebanon.) Having been a special operations officer, Levin tried to reemphasize light infantry operations and initiative. His efforts contributed to the formation of the Egoz Reconnaissance Battalion (Unit 621), a Sayeret (special operations) unit dedicated to counterguerrilla operations. This battalion developed tactics that could then be diffused to other units in Lebanon. Overall, however, Levin like other Israeli military leaders believed simplistically that it could deter Hezbollah by inflicting higher casualties.[108]

Southern Lebanon. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

Breaking Contact?

During the later 1990s, Israeli public pressure built to abandon the security zone. In 1999, Ehud Barak, a highly decorated former IDF chief of staff, became prime minister after a political campaign that promised withdrawal from Lebanon within twelve months. Syrian-Israeli negotiations in Geneva failed because Barak refused to release a piece of land near the Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberias), so the Israeli prime minister continued forward with a unilateral withdrawal from the security zone. Hezbollah's leaders were equally unwilling to compromise, avoiding any promise to end attacks on Israel in return for such a pullback. Instead, the Shi'a group increased its attacks, apparently posturing to claim responsibility for the Israeli evacuation. Although originally scheduled to complete the pullback by July 7, 2000, the IDF withdrew in great haste on May 24. This sudden move precipitated the collapse of the SLA, whose members either fled or were tried by Hezbollah for collaboration.[109] Soon thereafter, Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank began the demonstrations that evolved into the suicide bombings of the Second Intifada, absorbing much of the IDF's attention and resources for the next five years.

After an internal debate, Hezbollah leaders decided to continue their fundamental posture of opposition to Israel, a decision approved by Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Hezbollah's secretary-general, Nasrallah, provided training and limited weapons for Palestinians but emphasized that the primary responsibility for their liberation rested with the Palestinian themselves.[110]

Once Israel withdrew, many Lebanese civilians traveled to the border area to express their hatred by throwing stones at IDF positions. Palestinian groups also operated from South Lebanon to launch attacks on Israel, attacks that Israeli officials loosely attributed to Hezbollah.[111]

Hostilities between the IDF and Hezbollah continued at a lower level, each side overestimating the degree to which its strength would deter major operations by the other. While reducing direct cross-border strikes into Israel, Hezbollah circumvented the unofficial ceasefire by attacking elsewhere. In addition to periodic Katyusha fire into the occupied Golan Heights, the Shi'a group decided to target a tiny area of the Golan known as Shebaa Farms that was occupied by Israel but claimed by both Syria and (tenuously) Lebanon. Hezbollah fighters repeatedly attacked the IDF in the area, capturing soldiers (some of whom died of wounds) and then holding them and making ransom demands for the release of numerous political prisoners in Israel. This action gained great credibility for Hezbollah among Palestinians and Lebanese.[112]

Israel failed to respond significantly to the first such prisoner incident in October 2000. IDF generals argued, correctly, that any significant incursion

would lead to another open-ended operation, and the new government elected in February 2001 needed to avoid such incursions for political reasons. The government's head, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, had been responsible for the Palestinian massacres of 1982. Sharon suffered a debilitating stroke in January 2006, which removed him from political power. Hezbollah leaders apparently failed to recognize that his departure eliminated one reason for Israeli restraint in responding to prisoner raids.

Instead, Hezbollah placed exaggerated faith in the deterrent power of its accumulated missile systems. In addition to large numbers of Katyushas, the Shi'a group acquired longer-range rockets as well. These included the Iranian Zalzel-1 and Zalzel-2 rockets, with respective ranges of 125 and 210 kilometers, as well as shorter-range Iranian Fayors and Syrian 220 mm rockets, which collectively posed a threat to much of northern Israel.[113]

The Levant situation shifted in other ways. The demise of the Soviet Union and defeat of Iraq in 1991 left the Syrian leadership feeling increasingly vulnerable in the region, while the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon removed Damascus's pretext for remaining there.

After Hafiz al-Assad died in June 2000, his son Bashar rapidly assumed power. To appease the Bush administration, Syria supported UNSCR 1441 (November 2002), which charged Iraq with building and maintaining weapons of mass destruction. Despite this momentary agreement, however, Damascus became increasingly concerned that the United States might redraw the regional map at Syria's expense. To shore up its position, in 2004 Syria forced the Lebanese parliament to extend President Emile Lahoud in office for an unconstitutional third term; Damascus subsequently assassinated Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri and other opponents of Syrian interference. The murders outraged Lebanese public opinion to such a degree that, despite Hezbollah and Amal supporting Damascus, massive anti-Syrian demonstrations were staged, followed by formation of a rare political coalition of different confessions. Faced with unified opposition as well as criticism in the United Nations, Syria completed withdrawing its troops from Lebanon in late April 2005.[114] Hezbollah was if anything a more important ally for Damascus thereafter, but from the Israeli viewpoint Syria was unlikely to interfere in any future IDF operations against Lebanon.

Success and Failure

On July 12, 2006, Hezbollah ambushed an IDF patrol and captured two wounded soldiers, intending once again to hold them hostage to trade for the release of prisoners in Israeli jails. The patrol, mounted in two HMMWVs, consisted of reservists on their last day of active duty for that year. The ambush

occurred at a point where the patrol was briefly out of radio contact with its headquarters, and the attackers created diversions by shooting out surveillance cameras and firing mortars at other points. In addition to the two wounded POWs (who died in captivity) and three others killed in the ambush, an IDF attempt at immediate rescue resulted in five more deaths, including four crew members of a Merkava tank that drove over an IED. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan all joined in condemning Hezbollah for this risky attack.[115]

Three key Israeli leaders reacted with ill-considered haste. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert decided immediately on a tough response, but he was poorly served by two men whom he had inherited from his predecessor, the stricken Ariel Sharon. By Israeli standards, where many politicians are former career military officers, Defense Minister Amir Peretz had limited military experience. Lt. Gen. Dan Halutz, an IAF officer, was the first non-Army general to ever become chief of staff.[116] Neither of them was equipped to advise Olmert on the complexities of the war he was about to launch.

It would be simplistic to ascribe Halutz's subsequent mistakes to an overreliance on ideas such as effects-based operations (EBO), the concept that a military planner should begin by describing the desired strategic outcome and then work backward to decide which specific attacks to use, especially PGMs, to achieve that outcome without necessarily focusing on terrain. Advocates of EBO and related concepts often cited the air portion of the 1991 Desert Storm campaign as demonstrative of their ideas. Moreover, the 2003 conflict and American presence in Iraq encouraged Israeli military planners to think that the era of major conventional threats to their state had passed. Halutz and others did seek to use precision standoff fires to achieve certain effects.[117] In practice, however, neither Halutz in particular nor the IDF in general had fully embraced such nonlinear approaches to campaign planning; it would be more accurate to conclude that the frequent use of trendy jargon had muddled IDF planning and operations without resulting in a coherent new approach.[118]

Halutz also sought to avoid reserve mobilization and a general offensive, both of which, he knew, would come with considerable political and human costs. Instead, the IAF executed Operation Density. On the evening of July 13, 2006, thirty-four minutes of PGM bombing destroyed or neutralized fifty-nine Iranian-supplied Fajr and Zelzar rocket launchers at a price of fewer than twenty civilian casualties. In this and follow-up bombings, Israel almost eliminated Hezbollah's longer-range rockets while also hitting bridges that would have been necessary to move the two POWs away from the battle area. Operation Density hit virtually all Hezbollah targets known to the IDF; given that there was no military method to rescue the POWs, these early air attacks were probably the most effective blows that Israel could launch. Unfortunately for

their subordinates, however, neither the politicians nor Halutz were prepared to stop while they were ahead.[119] Instead, Israel pursued unrealistic demands including disarmament of Hezbollah and installation of both the Lebanese army and a strengthened UNIFIL on the border.

For several weeks, the IDF used a combination of shallow ground incursions and continued air strikes in a vain effort to suppress short-range Katyusha rocket fire while persuading Hezbollah that the cost of continuing the war was too high. The opposite occurred. On live television, Nasrallah broadcast an image of an Israeli missile boat off the Lebanese coast at the moment that Hezbollah hit it with an Iranian-made C802 missile, killing four crew members. Seeking to locate hidden Katyusha launchers, the IAF aimed at buildings on the outskirts of villages, killing so many civilians that it reversed Lebanese opposition to Hezbollah and damaged American diplomatic support for Israel. The IAF even struck Qana, sight of the 1996 disaster, again, although Hezbollah may have exaggerated the resulting casualties.[120] Bombing Hezbollah's headquarters and Nasrallah's residence in the suburbs of Beirut on July 14 damaged enemy command and control but killed more civilians without decisive effect on the war. All told, 2,000 missiles, 19,000 bombs, and 152,500 artillery and naval gunfire rounds fell on Lebanon, producing widespread destruction.[121]

Despite the best Israeli defensive efforts, a total of 3,917 rockets fell on northern Israel during the conflict, killing forty-one civilians and twelve reserve soldiers.[122] Israeli ground troops had no information about the concealed positions and aggressive tactics of Hezbollah.[123] Local incursions therefore led to avoidable casualties, such as when a company of the 1st (Golani) Infantry Brigade was ordered to "occupy" the town of Bint JBeil on July 21, leaving the troops surrounded by buildings occupied by their foes; eight Israelis died in a single firefight. General Halutz and the head of Northern Command, Maj. Gen. Ehud "Udi" Adam, proved unable to communicate with each other, to the point where Halutz installed his own deputy chief of staff inside Adam's headquarters, effectively relieving Adam. There were some Israeli successes, such as when timely intelligence enabled the 101st Paratroop Battalion to kill twenty-six Hezbollah soldiers making a counterattack on July 28. Overall, however, the fact that the Shi'a militia continued to fight and inflict casualties was a psychological victory over the Jewish state.[124] By contrast, the IDF's long neglect of its conventional forces was repeatedly illustrated by failures of logistics and combined arms coordination.

Although it still had difficulty coordinating major units, Hezbollah proved to be a brave and resourceful enemy. Both its Katyusha launchers and its defending infantry were concealed in elaborate bunkers. Armed with mortars, antitank guided missiles (ATGMs), and man-portable weapons, these fighters

showed again how difficult it is to capture well-defended positions. By itself, this ground defense was skillful but not particularly innovative; the supposed "hybrid" nature of this conflict lay in combining an effective ground defense and persistent rocket firings with skillful manipulation of public perceptions.[125]

Meanwhile, the Israeli public, for whom mobilization was the automatic response to a major threat, pressured politicians for broader actions. On July 27, the cabinet approved Change of Direction 8, a plan to reoccupy the old security zone that involved mobilization of three reserve divisions. Even then, Prime Minister Olmert and General Halutz delayed the offensive, initially activating only unit commanders rather than entire reserve units.[126]

Nathaniel Davis has argued persuasively that the IDF lost control of "operational time," the variable period available before an operation reaches a culminating point. The reasons for such a culmination may include loss of combat power or in this instance collapse of political and international support. Not only did its operations fail to achieve the ill-defined objectives, but the IDF's heavy-handed tactics played into Hezbollah's hands for propaganda purposes. The Shi'a group manipulated the information environment in a way that gained support for its efforts while causing the Israeli public to regard its own forces as ineffectual and indecisive.[127] Based on the 1973 conflict, Israeli leaders had become aware that American and international opinion would shift over time, but they overestimated how much time they had to act.

On the evening of August 11, 2006, the UN Security Council met to vote on a resolution that included at least some of what the Lebanese and Israeli governments sought in order to provide a stable ceasefire. That same evening, Olmert and Halutz belatedly launched their planned general offensive into southern Lebanon, apparently seeking to portray the appearance of victory. As the main effort in this offensive, the 162nd Division had to advance westward from the northeastern corner of Israel, moving parallel to and just south of the Litani River along a tributary of that river. Israel called the low ground in this area Wadi Saluki (the Arab name is al-Hujeir).

Unfortunately for the attackers, the tactical value of the area was equally apparent to Hezbollah, which had carefully prepared its defenses.[128] The day before the offensive, part of the 601st Armored Engineer Battalion had prematurely entered the wadi to be met by ATGM fire, but apparently this did not cause higher commanders to reassess their maneuver scheme. On the evening of the 11th, the 931st Nahal Battalion moved onto high ground that was supposed to overwatch the main advance, but the assigned position could not, in fact, observe the critical ground below. (The brigade commander supervising the 931st later acknowledged that in his twenty-two years of service he had never participated in a full brigade field exercise.)

Early on the morning of August 12, the 9th Battalion of the 162nd Division's 401st Armored Brigade began the main advance into the low ground, but tired soldiers took a wrong turn and missed the prepared river-crossing site. Multiple AT-14 Kornet ATGMs struck the battalion as well as an armored engineer vehicle. Northern Command refused to authorize artillery and air support for fear of friendly fire casualties. Ultimately, fourteen IDF soldiers including two company commanders died in this ambush, while the battalion commander and some fifty others were wounded.[129]

Other divisions involved in the last-minute advance also suffered casualties. The most significant such loss occurred when, immediately after airlifting paratroopers into Lebanon to search for Katyusha sites, a CH-53 helicopter was downed by a Hezbollah shoulder-fired missile, killing the five-man crew.[130] The unfinished offensive shuddered to a halt as the Israeli cabinet accepted a UN ceasefire on August 13. UNSCR 1701 did strengthen the hand of both Israel and the Lebanese government relative to Hezbollah, which had to give up some of its weapons while both the Lebanese army and a strengthened UNIFIL moved into the area. Nonetheless, the IDF had suffered significant damage to its reputation and therefore to its deterrent ability. The IAF had inflicted significant losses on Hezbollah's longer-range missiles but had never expected to be able to suppress all the Katyushas. Indirectly, this vulnerability helped energize the subsequent development of Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system.

Assessment

During the 1990s, both American and Israeli conventional forces downsized while relying increasingly on new sensor and precision munition capabilities that appeared to substitute technology for blood and manpower. Unfortunately, this shrinking and specialization of military skill sets left both nations with serious capability and intelligence gaps for dealing with a multiplicity of ambiguous situations that ranged from street demonstrations to terrorists to guerrillas to well-equipped if amorphous infantry like Hezbollah. Highly skilled special operators attempted to cover these capability gaps, but such operations often required surprise and massive firepower, neither of which was readily available for political reasons. Moreover, the exaggerated claims made on behalf of precision airpower in the 1991 Gulf conflict encouraged foreign and domestic observers to expect American and Israeli pilots to somehow defeat their enemies without *any* friendly or neutral casualties—an obvious impossibility even when tactical intelligence was completely accurate, a rarity especially in insurgency situations.

At the same time, US and Israeli leaders, in uniform and out, shared a collective aversion to open-ended obligations that resulted in friendly casualties.

The precedents of Vietnam and South Lebanon seemed to warn against such situations, especially when the public appeared unwilling to make sustained sacrifices. In both Somalia and Haiti, American governments and generals imposed short time frames and limited objectives that gave the appearance of restoring order without addressing the underlying, and poorly understood, social and economic causes of instability. After the failure of UNOSOM II, the Clinton administration further decided that future interventions must be done under American rather than UN auspices.

While regrettable, this lowball approach reflects a belief that the nation wished to alleviate humanitarian problems without excessive costs or exposure. While the PLO and Hezbollah, unlike Aideed and the Haitians, did indeed pose an existential threat—to Israel—purely military solutions could at best slow the bleeding caused by fundamental political, cultural, and financial conflicts.

CHAPTER 5

Yugoslavia Falls Apart

The area now known as Yugoslavia has been a nexus of violent division for centuries. Even before the Ottoman Turks entered the region in the 1460s, Bosnian Christians fell out with Rome over their subordination to the church in Hungary, while Bogomil heretics in what is now Bosnia rejected any church hierarchy. In the decades leading up to 1914, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire all exploited ethnic divisions in the Balkans to advance their own priorities. Even during World War II, these ethnicities as well as rival resistance organizations continued and exacerbated the struggle.

Until his death in 1980, Josip Broz (Tito), who had been instrumental in expelling the occupying German forces during World War II, imposed peace through a complicated system that permitted some autonomy, especially in economic matters, to the six component republics (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia) and two autonomous provinces (Kosovo and Vojvodina) of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). Tito demanded that the only legal national political party—the League of Communists—have the final authority, but beyond that he deliberately clouded the distinction between Yugoslav and ethnic nationhood to avoid the entire issue. Being himself a mixture of Slovene and Croatian, Tito courted Serb support by policies such as designating the Serbian dialect of Serbo-Croatian as the command language of the Yugoslav National Army (at the time abbreviated JNA). By contrast, the Belgrade government resisted efforts to assert Croatian autonomy and language, and in late 1971 it removed many Croats from positions in both the government and the League of Communists. The historian and former Titoist commander Franco Tudjman was imprisoned twice (1972, 1981) for disagreeing with Serbian allegations that, he said, exaggerated the effects of Croatian fascism during World War II.[1]

If anything, Tito's efforts to balance between nationalities encouraged people to think in terms of group rather than individual rights; in the 1990s,

Former Yugoslavia. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

this attitude often meant that, for example, a handful of Serbians in a village would consider their interests to be at least equal to the rights of a much larger population from another ethnic group. This was especially significant because the republics and regions often contained significant minorities of Serbs intermixed with other groups, just as Vladimir Putin later claimed to protect ethnic Russians embedded in other national areas, at the expense of the other nationalities. Tito's structure of Yugoslavia meant that only the League of Communists and the JNA held the federation together, and even the JNA's officer corps was dominated by ethnic Serbs.[2]

After Tito's death in 1980, the Yugoslav federal system frayed rapidly. Yet, as the diplomat Richard Holbrooke observed, "Yugoslavia's tragedy was not foreordained."[3] Post-Communist Europe was littered with similar opportunities for volatility, such as the internal division of Czechoslovakia and the large Magyar minorities inside Romania and Slovakia, yet those situations remained largely peaceful. If anything, during the 1980s ethnic differences within Yugoslavia were breaking down, with the majority of Serbs, Croats, and other

nationalities reporting little in the way of friction or threat from other groups.[4] Hyperinflation driven by a massive foreign debt was a more pressing cause of dissatisfaction than ancient ethnic rivalries.[5]

The fatal difference in Yugoslavia as compared to other multiethnic states was that several of Tito's successors defended and expanded their own political power by exploiting old prejudices and suspicions without regard for the rights or survival of others. These politicians deliberately mobilized extremist supporters to build their own power base not only against targeted ethnicities but even against moderates within their own nationalities.[6] Western Europeans, who believed that such virulent nationalism had been discredited by World War II, had difficulty recognizing the malevolent intent of the autocrats in former Yugoslavia; these other Europeans persisted in dealing with such extremists as if the latter were open to true compromise. Instead, as British general Sir Rupert Smith observed in Bosnia, "the combatants did not want a collective peace so much as their three distinctive [ethnic national] ideas of peace and were bent on fighting for them."[7] Because of these distorted ideas, the participants also misunderstood or subverted the objectives of the various would-be peacemakers, who ultimately acted forcefully only after they realized that the conflict could not be contained.[8]

Significant Serb minorities existed within most of the constituent parts of the Yugoslav federation, and during the 1980s politicians encouraged these minorities to be fearful concerning their future. As a result, they developed an exaggerated sense of insecurity and perceived discrimination; for example, many such Serbs initially embraced the League of Communists as the best means to protect their national interests. During 1987–88, however, Slobodan Milošević gained widespread support among the ethnic Serbians of Kosovo and Vojvodina, garnering control of four out of eight votes in the Yugoslav federation executive. Given their orientation toward their own group rights, his Serbian followers could not understand why other nationalities such as the Kosovars wanted democratic protections against Serb dominance.[9]

Milošević was an experienced if cynical politician with some sense of what was possible or impossible. His counterpart in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Radovan Karadžić, had less experience and more extremist tendencies. Karadžić was a psychiatrist who used his understanding of group psychology to manipulate his followers. Initially following Milošević's lead, the Bosnian Serb leader became a full-blown psychopath who used claims that the Serbs were victimized to justify any action, however extreme, against the other nationalities.[10] Eventually, Karadžić came to believe his own propaganda fantasies, which Ambassador Holbrooke accurately if inelegantly described as "historical bulls**t."[11]

With significantly less bombast, the other nationalities sought to unite, if only to protect themselves from competing ethnic groups. Franco Tudjman was a hero to many Croatians, but he encouraged ethnic divisions to advance his own autocratic career. Catholic Croatians living in southern Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as former residents who had immigrated to North America and now sent funds and volunteers home, wanted to link their territory with that of Croatia proper. Such deep ethnic suspicions prevented the different groups from cooperating to gain democratic and civil rights from the central government.[12] The carefully nurtured national legend of Yugoslav partisan resistance during World War II fueled violence by making warfare seem like a natural expression of self-defense against perceived oppression.

While Yugoslavia was filled with individuals and entities eager to assert themselves militarily, Europe as a whole had, if anything, too many would-be policemen and peacemakers trying to stop the violence. The United States had become accustomed to intervening in various parts of the world, while a 1990 agreement created the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) for the purpose of preventing and regulating conventional armed conflicts on the Continent.

France, Germany, Italy, and other European powers all sought to exercise their national power. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization had a multinational military command structure throughout Western Europe, of which Allied Forces Southern Europe and its subordinate component, Allied Air Forces Southern Europe, became directly involved in Yugoslavia. The European Community, which during the 1990s was evolving into the more centralized European Union, sought to assert its power by opposing the unilateral efforts of the United States and other powers. The Russian Federation of Boris Yeltsin tried to reassert the authority of the defunct Soviet Union, both by itself and as part of the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council, formed in 1997. The United Nations Security Council passed a number of resolutions that might be interpreted as authorizing the use of NATO force to prevent violence and protect human rights.[13]

All of these entities struggled, often at cross-purposes, to resolve conflicts peacefully while protecting human rights. Far too often, however, states volunteered diplomats and armed forces without recognizing the intractable nature of the issues within Yugoslavia.

Macedonia and Slovenia

The League of Communists rapidly lost legitimacy and authority at the end of the 1980s, while reformers and nationalists sought autonomy or full independence for their republics. The two peripheral republics, Macedonia and

Slovenia, were better positioned to depart the federation, although neither's independence was a foregone conclusion.

After careful negotiations with Belgrade, the Macedonian government declared independence in September 1991, and the JNA completed a withdrawal from that province the following March. Part of the reason for this peaceful resolution was that the populace elected Kiro Gligorov, a supporter of Titoism and the federation concept, as president. However, the desperate poverty of the new state was exacerbated by the fact that both Bulgaria and Greece claimed to be the spiritual heirs of ancient Macedonia; Athens in particular objected to the use of the very word "Macedonia" and various symbols of Alexander the Great, to the point of imposing economic sanctions that isolated the new state. In 1994, Serbia concentrated troops over a dispute concerning its border with Macedonia. In December 1992, a small detachment of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) that had taken shape in the remainder of Yugoslavia had deployed to Macedonia. This element, eventually redesignated as the UN Preventive Deployment (UNPREDEP), was unique at the time because it included American troops. This symbolic deployment at least offered some security for the remainder of the 1990s.[14]

The first significant violence arose when Slovenia tried to follow Macedonia into independence. The Communist League head of Slovenia, Milan Kučan, gained popularity by tolerating the development of multiparty democracy in the province, although he authorized the arrest of several opposition figures. In February 1990, the Slovenian Communists dissolved after Milošević hijacked the meeting of all the Communist Leagues in Belgrade. Elections in April gave a parliamentary majority to a coalition of parties known as the Democratic Opposition of Slovenia (DEMOS), but Kučan was elected president while well-intentioned critics delayed the creation of defense forces for the protorepublic.[15]

Federal authorities and the new Slovenian government played "chicken" about defense issues, each side stopping just short of violence. The JNA's very existence was tied to the survival of the Yugoslav state, so it began preparations to retain control over the national territory. In May 1990, the JNA began to withdraw heavy weapons from the control of the territorial defense units in both Slovenia and Croatia. In the former republic, the newly appointed DEMOS head of defense, Janez Janša, forbade further withdrawals, and eventually the Slovenes "stole" these weapons back from federal arms depots. The arms issue also allowed Janša to identify which officers were more loyal to Belgrade than to Ljubljana. The JNA refused to negotiate about having Slovenian conscripts serve only in Slovenia, so the Ljubljana government began to withhold those conscripts due to report to other areas of Yugoslavia. Ante Marković, prime minister of the federation, threatened to seize draft records and have the

JNA perform its own call-ups but failed to implement his threat. Eventually, more than 75 percent of the ethnic Slovenes in the JNA were returned to their republic.[16]

Having garrisons throughout Slovenia was both an advantage and a handicap for the JNA. Federal commanders repeatedly seized defense buildings and even individual Slovenian defenders but had to release both when the new government disconnected telephones and power and cut off food supplies to the garrisons. Janša also used the media to embarrass Belgrade, publishing leaked documents that showed the JNA's violent intent toward Slovenia. At the same time, he publicly reassured active-duty and retired JNA personnel that they would have job security in the new state.[17]

The provisional Slovenian army, known officially as the Maneuvering Structure of National Defense (MSND), lacked both funds and heavy weapons. Many of its units took the form of "minutemen," arming part-time soldiers who lived near the installation they were slated to protect. Within narrow constraints, they prepared for a possible conflict that neither the general public nor the JNA expected would occur.

Newly elected governments in Slovenia and Croatia both wanted to modify the Yugoslav constitution to create a confederation of sovereign states, an idea that threatened the mandate and existence of the JNA. On June 25, 1991, the elected assemblies of both states declared themselves sovereign and independent, with the intention of taking control of border checkpoints and customs sites within their territories. Anticipating this, the JNA staff had revised the Sutjeska 2 Plan originally intended to defend the northwestern republics from a NATO invasion. Seeking to avoid conflict with Belgrade, President Tudjman of Croatia reportedly promised the Yugoslav defense minister, Gen. Veljko Kadijević, that his state would not meddle in Slovenian affairs.[18]

The Slovenian confrontation came to a head on June 26–27, 1991, when the JNA deployed to assert federal control over border checkpoints. Although the JNA's armor captured a few border posts, its air strikes were too inaccurate to be effective. The MSND shot down two JNA Gazelle helicopters flying over Ljubljana, a move the new government publicized widely to shake the confidence of its opponents. Few of the federal soldiers were willing to press home their attacks. Moreover, Milošević urged JNA commanders to focus on securing Serbian areas as the basis for a new ethnic state rather than trying to retain control of all of Yugoslavia. In nine days of fighting, the JNA lost 44 killed, 187 wounded, and 1,700 taken prisoner, mostly young conscripts who were surrounded by the activists of the Slovenian militia.[19]

On July 7, 1991, the European Community mediated the Brioni Agreement between the new governments of Slovenia, Croatia, and federal Yugoslavia.

Although the two new republics gained control over border crossings and customs revenues, they promised to demobilize and return captured weapons to the JNA. Yugoslav troops and police were to withdraw from both republics. Thus, the Brioni Agreement effectively abandoned the idea of federal Yugoslavia without ensuring an agreed-upon framework for what was to follow it. In particular, skillful Slovenian and Croatian propaganda had depicted their defenders as valiant freedom lovers fighting the evil JNA and Serbian extremists, a gross oversimplification that led to distorted Western perceptions of the much more intense conflicts during the next eight years.[20]

The Brioni Agreement did not end Croatia's ethnic problems, especially since the JNA distributed arms to ethnic Serbs in eastern Croatia. The resulting militias, plus volunteers from Serbia, began to force ethnic Croatians out of the Krajina (the frontier region that wraps around the western bulge of Bosnia). When the Croatian military intervened, the JNA interposed itself, pretending to be peacekeepers while actually protecting Serbian gains. In December 1991, the Croatian Serbs declared a Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK), and in February 1992 two other Serbian regions joined the RSK in declaring their separation from Croatia. Because the European Community, UN, and other international groups were attempting to maintain existing borders, President Milošević did not annex this land to Serbia but quietly supported the RSK with weapons and funds.[21]

Milošević was also working to make the JNA into a fully responsive political instrument. In January 1992, a UN helicopter was shot down, killing five crew members. This error forced General Kadijević to resign, and over the ensuing several months fifty-nine other generals were cashiered or retired. Coming on top of various ethnic desertions, this made the Yugoslav army—redesignated in April as the Vojska Jugoslaviya but still commonly referred to as JNA—into a more obedient political instrument of the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav presidency. Having already seized the Dalmatian coast around Dubrovnik in January 1992, eight months later the JNA began a siege of the Slovenian town of Vukovar, on the Danube River. At the enormous cost of some 50,000 killed and wounded, the Croatian defenders stopped the JNA at Vukovar and defended Zagreb. In the process, however, the JNA had carved out corridors connecting Serbian Krajina to both the Adriatic and the Danube.[22]

Bosnia

Within Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Serbian, Croatian, and Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) populations were hopelessly intertwined and not at all distinguishable into different territories. Efforts to intimidate various groups into leaving their homes represented a callous attempt to create facts on the ground

by regrouping the populations into identifiable statelets. Ethnic politicians encouraged fear to motivate these efforts, prompting ethnic Serbs to seek inclusion into a Greater Serbia, Croatians to feel outnumbered and tend toward union with their neighboring state, and Bosniaks to resist any partition.[23]

The Croatian conflict helped shape the ensuing bloodshed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. When the Brioni Agreement required the withdrawal of JNA troops from Croatian territory, most of these units relocated into Bosnian or adjacent territories, prepared to control the next tranche of remaining Yugoslav territory. General Kadijević later acknowledged that he had worked with Serbian activists to help create militias in the Krajina. Significant numbers of ethnic Croatians resident in Bosnia and Herzegovina had gained combat experience in the Slovenian fighting, then returned home to help organize the defense of their localities. Meanwhile, the Serb Democratic Party (Srpska Demokratska Stranka, SDS) blocked the functioning of local governments in which it held office while conducting an unsanctioned plebiscite on November 9–10, 1991. When most Bosniaks and Croatians boycotted this plebiscite, the Serb politicians used the skewed results to declare five areas as autonomous Serb regions within Bosnia.[24]

The key figure in this Serbian obstructionism was Radovan Karadžić. While generally obeying Milošević because of the latter's power in Belgrade, Karadžić did not articulate the Greater Serbia idea and tried to avoid being associated with the RSK. Instead, he made a private deal with Gen. Nikola Uzela, commander of the Fifth JNA Corps in Banja Luka, not to meddle with army affairs in return for JNA arms and backing. Karadžić publicly criticized Bosniak and Serbian efforts toward separatism. At the same time, he exaggerated various attacks or indignities suffered by his supporters, using these to justify creating separate Serb police in most municipalities. Whipping himself and his followers into a false sense of outrage against supposed persecution, the Bosnian Serb leader began a process of incrementally taking over local police forces (where Serbs controlled municipalities) or forming his own, pro-Serb police forces in other municipalities. He sought a Serbian monopoly of force, either through controlling local police forces or by creating his own armed forces.[25]

While Karadžić attempted to dismember Bosnia, Alija Izetbegović labored to hold it together. Like Tudjman, Izetbegović had twice been imprisoned by Tito's regime. When released in 1990, he helped found the Party of Democratic Action (Stranka demokratske akcije, SDA), which he led to victory in every Bosnian election from 1990 to 2002. A fairly devout Muslim, he nonetheless believed in an inclusive Bosnian society of multiple peoples and religions.[26]

Diplomatic and economic efforts had little effect on the incipient conflict. A European arms embargo in September 1991 hurt the new states much more

Bosnia and Herzegovina. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

than it did the Serbs, who inherited most of the weapons of the JNA. On February 25, 1992, UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali persuaded the Security Council to pass Resolution 743 creating a UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) of some 14,000 troops.[27] Given its previous experience with peacekeeping forces, the United States refused to participate. Just as in Somalia and other cases, contributing nations assumed a ceasefire and respect for UN authority that did not exist, burdening their troops with unrealistic rules of engagement. Although member states pledged 34,000 peacekeepers, only about 7,000 actually arrived in theater. Because of the post–Cold War reorganization of their armed forces (see chapter 3), Europeans were unprepared to contribute meaningful forces. Seeking to implement its moral beliefs, the Dutch Defense Ministry eventually offered several thousand troops including a battalion—as yet unformed—of its new airmobile brigade, even though Dutch law limited such a deployment to volunteers in an army that was still mostly conscripted;

the understrength battalion ended up trying to defend Srebrenica.[28] The United Kingdom sent a unit that was scheduled to be disbanded anyway, the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

Although UNPROFOR did contain violence in Croatia, in June 1992 it was stretched too thin with part of its troops deployed into Bosnia while still lacking an overall strategy to address the violence there. Its local headquarters moved several times but was generally in Sarajevo. Pockets of Bosniak Muslims complained of being starved, yet once relief convoys reached them some Bosniaks compromised UNPROFOR neutrality by attacking Serb-controlled areas. UNPROFOR commanders found themselves in an impossible situation, attempting to shield vulnerable groups while risking becoming hostages themselves. Pressed by the United States to use air attacks rather than risk ground troops, NATO declared a no-fly zone over Bosnia and offered to provide air support to the UN peacekeepers; the Serbs quickly realized that they could restrain NATO air support by threatening UNPROFOR ground troops. Serbian militias also learned that they could interdict humanitarian aid and UNPROFOR supply columns, seizing food and fuel as well as taking hostages among aid workers and soldiers on leave. Among the opposing ethnic groups, the Serbs especially tested UNPROFOR to see how far it would react to particular provocations. When political supervisors restrained such responses, the warring parties and especially the SDS military chief of staff, former JNA general Ratko Mladić, developed a contempt for the UN and attempted to manipulate or evade it for their own purposes.[29]

UNPROFOR had extended into Bosnia-Herzegovina because of a series of events in April 1992, when, directed by Karadžić, the SDS and "Republika Srpska" violently seized 70 percent of the region while using snipers, roadblocks, and artillery bombardment to discourage other ethnic groups from remaining in Sarajevo. The Bosnian presidency declared a state of emergency, besieged JNA barracks in Sarajevo, and attempted to absorb the Croatian militias within the province, although this absorption provoked repeated disagreements and at best uneasy cooperation.[30]

The JNA V Corps eventually withdrew from Bosnia but left behind the majority of its soldiers and weapons, including 500 tanks, 400 artillery pieces, 48 multiple rocket launchers, and even fighter-bombers. The fighting continued without any clear logic; 29,000 Serb fighters were tied up in the Sarajevo struggle, while Karadžić often negotiated in bad faith. This helps explain why seventy-seven ceasefires were arranged between April 1992 and May 1994, with most of them collapsing quickly. In December 1994, Karadžić even imitated the Haitian military, inviting former president Carter to visit and then trying to get him to endorse the Serbian plans to segregate Bosnia.[31]

The Serbs were by no means the only aggressors in this period, but their brutality encouraged a growing international consensus for intervention. By 1993, there were some 4 million refugees and displaced persons in Yugoslavia, from which the new Bosnian army recruited several brigades of highly motivated troops, the first to openly identify themselves as Muslims.[32]

By March 1993, several pockets of Bosniaks, both residents and displaced persons, had developed around the towns of Goražde, Srebrenica, and Zepa in eastern Bosnia. Serbs and Bosniaks fought over the area for several weeks. Gen. Philippe Morillon, the UNPROFOR commander in Bosnia, led a small number of UN troops to Srebrenica where refugees surrounded him, demanding protection from Serbs and refusing to allow him to leave. Appalled by the situation, Morillon declared the towns to be "demilitarized" and eventually arranged a local ceasefire. UNSCR 819 demanded an end to Serb attacks on the areas, in effect ratifying Morillon's declaration of "safe areas" even though that concept remained ill-defined. Yet the troops available to protect these enclaves were severely limited in both numbers and capability; Srebrenica was defended by 429 Dutch soldiers and thirty underarmored personnel carriers; Zepa had only sixty-eight Ukrainian soldiers. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees warned the Security Council that it must either reinforce or evacuate the towns.[33]

In February 1994, a NATO air patrol shot down four Yugoslav fighters near Banja Luka. Beginning in April, NATO air strikes at the request of UNPROFOR sought to punish ceasefire violations by militias, mostly Serbians, inside Bosnia and Herzegovina. To neutralize this threat, in late May 1995 various Serbian troops seized some four hundred peacekeepers as hostages and posed them in photographs chained to ammunition bunkers and similar targets. Similarly, on May 27 the Bosnian Serbs made the mistake of masquerading as Frenchmen and kidnapping twelve French marines who were guarding the Vrbanja Bridge near Sarajevo. French infantry and marines promptly recaptured the bridge at bayonet point, inflicting significant casualties on the Serbs, who thereafter left the French alone. Unfortunately, one of the French hostages died when Bosniak troops opened fire in an ill-conceived effort to help the French. More generally, however, the hostage-taking prompted the UN to place severe limits on the use of air support, as the Serbs had intended.[34]

"Safe Havens"

The hostage-taking reflected a growing shortage of manpower among the combatants, especially the Serbs, who had laid claim to large portions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, besieged Sarajevo, tried to control the Krajina, and now found themselves hard-pressed to retain their territories. The question of the

three UN Safe Areas—Goražde, Zepa, and Srebrenica—was especially acute. From the purely selfish Serbian perspective, too many Serb combatants were committed to containing these enclaves. Given the large numbers of Bosniak males within the areas, the Serbian leadership did not consider it safe to permit this population to move around freely. For three years prior to the city's final capture, Serbian forces deliberately starved enclaves such as Srebrenica, which eventually contained 40,000 people, including displaced persons.[35] Goražde held about 45,000, including some 8,000 men of the underequipped Bosniak 81st Division.[36]

When starvation failed to work, the besiegers turned to direct assault and mass murder. Robert Donia, Karadžić's biographer, argues that the Serb politician, not General Mladic, planned the genocide and took pains to ensure he left no records of that planning.[37]

The Serb effort began with Goražde. There, a combined battalion of the Royal Welch Fusiliers and Duke of Wellington's Regiment held a precarious series of observation posts (OPs) on the hills overseeing the town. Like the other UNPROFOR troops, this battalion was short of food, fuel, and ammunition because of the Serbian interdiction of supplies. In late May 1995, the Bosnian Serb Army began mortaring the British positions and taking hostages, eventually including thirty-five prisoners. Rather than abandon their positions, the British soldiers held onto the OPs until they were relieved by Muslim soldiers to protect the town. At one point, John Major telephoned the battalion commander, Jonathon Riley, who correctly feared a genocidal attack on the town. Riley's explanation of the situation, given under mortar fire to the British prime minister, was so blunt that a Special Air Service team infiltrated the besieged town to confirm that, indeed, Lieutenant Colonel Riley was sane and in full control of his troops.[38] The British force succeeded in protecting the local populace until the latter could evacuate.

Srebrenica was less fortunate. Between July 8 and 12, 1995, Mladic's Serbs steadily pressed in on the Dutch defenders, seizing OPs and taking hostages. The Dutch battalion commander kept his superiors informed and issued various warnings, but his rules of engagement and shortages of ammunition prevented an effective defense. After the Serbian hostage-taking, UN procedures for approval of air strikes had become too cumbersome to be effective. Once Mladic had rolled up and disarmed the OPs, the Serbian general appeared in person, promised that no one would harm the women and children, and began busing them away from the enclave. The Serbs prevented the Dutch from following the movement of Bosnian males, most of whom they murdered. Serbian troops used captured UN equipment and uniforms to lure Bosniaks into surrendering, although elements of the Bosniak 28th Division and the Srebrenica

local government did break through Serbian lines a few days later.[39] The helpless Dutch soldiers were eventually released, but more than 8,000 Bosniaks died in this genocidal attack. A combined force of Croatian and Bosnian Croat troops attacked in the south of Herzegovina on July 29, distracting the Serbs and permitting many of the civilians encircled at Zepa to escape.[40]

Stung by the massacres at Srebrenica, the Major government in London wanted to threaten massive air attacks to deter further encroachment on Goražde. Gen. Rupert Smith, the UNPROFOR commander in Sarajevo, argued that this threat could not apply solely to the British enclave. Instead, Smith persuaded Mladic, who no longer regarded the UN troops as a threat, to order his subordinates to permit the British battalion to withdraw unopposed. Then in August, Smith used the distractions of a UN reaction force attack and NATO air strikes on the Serbs at Sarajevo to enable the British task force to evacuate Goražde while Mladic was off balance.[41]

Deliberate Force, Dayton, and IFOR

Mladic had more to worry about than just UNPROFOR and NATO; the Serbian empire was unraveling under the sustained pressure of war. Increasing numbers of trained JNA officers and soldiers defected to the growing armed forces of the newly independent states. The JNA's efforts to mobilize reservists even inside Serbia itself provoked widespread mutiny and refusal to go to the front. One conscript drove his armored personnel carrier to Belgrade and parked it outside the federal legislature building.[42]

In July 1992, a surprise attack by 6,000 Croat soldiers had pierced UN positions in the Krajina and retaken the Maslenica Bridge, which linked Dalmatia with northern Croatia. In September, Tudjman sent Croat troops against the Serbs in the Krajina but withdrew on UN directions. Appalled by this internecine fighting, the US government pressured Tudjman to change his approach; American diplomats sponsored cooperation between Croats and Bosniaks, while American contractors helped train the burgeoning Croatian military. In the revulsion after Srebrenica, Croatian and Bosnian Croat troops overran the Krajina in only three and a half days, capturing Knin on August 5, 1995. The Serbian statelet there collapsed as the Croatians outfought the poorly trained Serbs on the ground. Now it was the turn of unfortunate Serbs to suffer from ethnic cleansing, with hundreds of homes burned and thousands of civilians driven into internal exile. Public apathy about this in Serbia prompted Milošević to seek peace, rightly believing that a further war would destabilize his government.[43]

Simultaneously, the genocide at Srebrenica led the United States and NATO to conclude that only force would stop the Serbian crimes. On August 28, 1995,

another callous Serbian shelling of civilians in Sarajevo brought on a significant NATO air response. Beginning on August 30, NATO aircraft conducted Operation Deliberate Force, flying 3,315 sorties, including 750 attack missions, against fifty-six target complexes. Tomahawk cruise missiles targeted air defenses at Banja Luka, facilitating the Croatian/Bosnian ground gains. Russia, Serbia's longtime patron, was unable to halt the attacks.[44]

Deliberate Force began as a miniaturized version of the Desert Storm campaign but ended as another combined air and ground action. Despite severe limitations from the UN, previous NATO air operations over Bosnia had prepared the way for a more significant operation by damaging Bosnian Serb and Yugoslav government air defenses.[45]

This long preparatory period offered time to concentrate forces, identify targets, and familiarize participants with the situation. The USAF even dispatched veteran 1991 air planners to advise the air operations center that would direct the effort from Vicenza, Italy.[46]

In keeping with the Desert Storm model and Air Force doctrine, some of the first strikes destroyed the communications towers linking Bosnia with Belgrade, isolating the Bosnian Serb Army from its support in the Yugoslav government.[47] Thereafter, NATO aircraft focused primarily on military equipment inside Bosnia, just as most of the targets in 1991 had been military units inside Kuwait. Twenty NATO tactical air control parties on the ground directed some of these strikes and assessed their effects upon the opposition. Almost 70 percent of the ordnance used were guided bombs or cruise missiles. The entire operation included only thirteen days of air attacks, interrupted by a UN-requested pause between September 1 and 4. At the end of this brief campaign, Serbian president Milošević, acting for the Bosnian Serbs, accepted NATO and UN demands for a ceasefire.[48]

Airpower appeared triumphant, although just as in 1991 its success was arguably due to interaction with ground efforts. By destroying BSA communications and weapons, the air attacks significantly aided the Bosnian government and Croatian ground offensives that had begun on August 1. Moreover, the UNPROFOR commander had created a rapid reaction force that used NATO bombs to support its own offensive operations. The combination of air and artillery was far greater than anything the BSA had encountered before and clearly contributed to the Serbian defeat.[49]

After trying in vain to involve Mr. Carter again, the Serbs in both Belgrade and Bosnia agreed to attend peace talks conducted at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base outside Dayton, Ohio, in September 1995. Veteran American diplomat Richard Holbrooke, who had been seeking a resolution to the civil conflict for years, had to corral the different ethnic and governmental entities

and avoid Russian interference. He succeeded in imposing an agreement that divided Bosnia and Herzegovina and included a NATO-Russian occupation army known as the Implementation Force (IFOR). Even then, it required the efforts of US Secretary of State Warren Christopher and UN Secretary-General Annan to get agreement; Defense Secretary Perry also had to negotiate with his Russian counterpart, Pavel Grachev, to maintain a unified command chain within IFOR.[50] The Bosnian Serb delegates tried to reject the provisions that allowed the IFOR commander, in contrast to UNPROFOR, to unilaterally order local troops to cease actions or move. Then-Lt. Gen. Wesley Clark, who had developed and staffed the elaborate plan for IFOR, went over the Bosnians' heads to Milošević, who recognized that the time had arrived for full cooperation.[51]

IFOR was based on NATO's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), which in turn had taken form in 1992, built on the framework of the former I British Corps headquarters to provide NATO with a deployable force after most of the Central Army Group stood down at the end of the Cold War. Commanded by British lieutenant general Michael Walker, IFOR initially totaled some 60,000 troops, including three division headquarters (British, French, and US) plus smaller elements from other NATO members. Regrettably, during the Dayton negotiations the US Congress had insisted on limiting the initial American deployment to one year, which was far too short a time to restore peace and order. This time limit necessitated a significant restructuring at the end of 1996, from which emerged the next increment of NATO troops known as the Stabilization Force, or SFOR, with only half the original troop strength.[52]

As a combat formation, IFOR/SFOR had limited capabilities to clear mines or assist displaced persons. Nor was IFOR prepared to police an unruly province although it did provide backing for the unarmed UN International Police Task Force. The military was especially leery of apprehending accused war criminals. Only gradually did small special operations units begin to apprehend and deport accused war criminals for trial. In July 1997, for example, British Special Air Service troops arrested one such wanted man but killed another in an operation that also cost one British soldier wounded.[53]

IFOR and then SFOR troops settled into an uneasy occupation, although some participants scoffed at the US military, which, based on previous experience in Somalia as well as the hostage-taking in Bosnia itself, was understandably cautious about troop security. A number of confrontations occurred in which Serbian troops in civilian clothes pretended to be protesters but carried lumber to use as clubs; the IFOR/SFOR generally succeeded in controlling these "demonstrations," but the Clinton administration and especially Defense Secretary William Cohen were acutely uncomfortable with the aggressive

actions of American commanders, actions that seemed to risk casualties. By contrast, IFOR/SFOR, whose only purpose was to provide peace and stability in the war-torn country, received undue criticism for failing to solve the basic ethnic issues that had made the war so bitter. US and UN diplomats kept trying to get IFOR/SFOR to be more supportive of civilian government efforts, but with only three battalions plus multiple installations to secure in Bosnia, the US Army had limited troops available for support of civil authority.[54]

Still, after years of bloody and indecisive struggle, the Dayton talks and SFOR seemed to restore calm to the area of former Yugoslavia. Providing the troops and especially the headquarters to maintain this calm proved challenging for the downsized post–Cold War militaries of the West. Over the ensuing years at the end of the millennium, National Guard division headquarters oversaw the US-led multinational division force in SFOR on seven different occasions. This experience paid unexpected dividends by preparing the Guard for the varied missions it performed in Iraq and elsewhere after the 2003 conflict.[55] Finally, in December 2004, the European Union Force (EUFOR) for Bosnia and Herzegovina assumed responsibility from SFOR for continuing to implement the Dayton Peace Accords, with only 10 percent (6,000 troops) of IFOR's original strength.

After Dayton, both American and British leaders concluded that peacekeeping and diplomacy could only work when backed by military force.[56] The glow of this success tended to obscure several corollaries that are apparent in retrospect. First, military force requires unified and determined political-military leadership willing to use all levers of military power. Second, that military action has to be effective in coercing the opposition, convincing the other side that the consequences of continued defiance would be disastrous to its interests. Third, restoring law and order requires effective local police forces. Finally, of course, all such military operations from 1991 onward depended on the accumulated military investment of the 1980s, an investment that gradually dissipated as Western armed forces and intelligence agencies continued to pay the "peace dividend" for the end of the Cold War.

Kosovo

Another portion of former Yugoslavia continued to fester in the 1990s. In the patriotic lore of the region, the 1389 Battle of Kosovo, when the Ottoman Turks defeated a combined army of Serbs and other Christians, has assumed the same hallowed status as the 1836 defense of the Alamo in American history; the Battle of Kosovo appeared as a gallant defense that preceded the Turkish invasion and conquest of the Balkans. Ethnic Serbs and Albanians both considered themselves to be the original inhabitants of the region. Within the Ottoman

Empire, Kosovo had a long tradition of armed opposition to central control, while during World War II the German occupiers exploited ethnic divisions, leading to massacres on both sides. In the later twentieth century, the high birth rate among Muslim occupants contributed to massive unemployment while at the same time providing Serb politicians with a pretext to warn of the encroaching effects of this growing, non-Christian group.[57]

The Titoist effort to encourage national unity and overcome ethnic fractures acknowledged twenty-four different groups within Kosovo while permitting the Muslim occupants to advance their educational and cultural identity. In 1971, the Belgrade government not only gave Kosovo many of the self-government rights of the other Yugoslav regions but also normalized relations with neighboring Albania, a move that increased cultural exchanges. Three years later, the fourth constitution of the FRY gave Kosovo representation in the federal government and courts. Yet commerce and employment lagged in Kosovo, exacerbating Albanian petty crime and disorders that in turn gave Serbs an increased sense of insecurity as a minority. Significant numbers migrated to the other republics, while ethnic Serbs became passionate advocates of communism and the FRY in part because of the vague threat they felt from their neighbors.[58]

While building his campaign to gain the support of ethnic Serbs, in 1989 Milošević abolished much of Kosovo's autonomy, moving in federal troop and police units to repress ethnic Albanian efforts toward self-rule. The scholarly professor Ibrahim Rugova led the Democratic League of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës, LDK) in a nonviolent effort to reassert Kosovar autonomy. In July 1990, the LDK in the Kosovar Assembly followed the lead of Slovenia and Croatia, declaring itself to be independent before the federal government dissolved the assembly. The LDK continued to conduct illegal elections beginning with an unauthorized referendum in which 87 percent reportedly voted for independence. In March 1992, another underground election designated Rugova as president. President Bush had warned Milošević that the United States would use military force if the Serbs began a conflict in Kosovo, but the repression continued. In 1993, the Kosovar Liberation Army (KLA), a small band of radicals, began terror bombings; this group attracted a few mujahideen veterans of Afghanistan, contributing to the Serbian claim that the KLA were terrorists. When the Albanian government collapsed in a financial scandal in 1997, the public in that country began smuggling large quantities of weapons into Kosovo for use by the rebels. (NATO and the Western European Union sent 6,000 troops from eleven nations, primarily Italy, to provide stability and humanitarian aid to Albania in April 1997.[59]) In March 1998, Yugoslav forces conducted a bloody assault on a rural clan stronghold in northern Kosovo, killing eighteen women and ten children in the process. This galvanized the

resistance, but the JNA launched a sustained counterinsurgency campaign while portraying the rebels as Islamic terrorists.[60]

Leaders from the United States and other NATO states objected strenuously to the ongoing bloodshed in Kosovo but were reluctant to commit troops on the ground.[61] After much hesitation, they apparently concluded on the basis of Operation Deliberate Force that they could use precision air strikes to force the Serbian government to halt. This time, however, there was no equivalent of the Croatian offensive on the ground, nor was the United States willing to bring similar pressure to bear. Given continuing American reluctance to commit ground troops, National Security Advisor Samuel "Sandy" Berger and President Clinton both stated publicly that no ground campaign was necessary, anticipating that airpower alone would force Milošević to halt, even though in Kosovo, unlike Bosnia, his prestige and government were personally committed.[62] Moreover, in contrast to Desert Storm, NATO had identified relatively few appropriate targets inside Serbia and Kosovo that could be struck to coerce the Serbs. Senior American officers doubted that there were sufficient targets for such a bombing campaign.[63] After several years of downsizing while focusing on field forces in Iraq and Bosnia, the American intelligence community had fallen behind in maintenance of databases such as might contain the location of Yugoslav government facilities.

Instead, NATO attempted to use the threat of force to compel Serbian compliance. In June 1998, one hundred NATO combat aircraft conducted a no-notice flyby demonstration over Albania and Macedonia, where they would show up on Serbian radars to send a message. Thereafter, Ambassador Holbrooke and NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana urged Gen. Wesley Clark, the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR), to telephone President Milošević, again telegraphing NATO's focus on events in Kosovo.[64]

In September, NATO defense ministers issued warning orders for a possible air attack. In response to this threat, on October 13 Milošević promised to pull back heavy weapons and return to peacetime policing of Kosovo, yet he dragged his heels about implementation. Ambassador Holbrooke and President Milošević agreed upon monitoring by an expanded but still unarmed observer force provided through the OSCE. NATO leaders muscled the Serbs into promising withdrawal of police and other troops from Kosovo, but neither side stopped fighting. On January 15, 1999, a Serbian punitive attack at Račak in southeastern Kosovo killed forty-five civilians, and Serbia expelled the OSCE monitor who alerted the world to this crime. Two weeks later, the North Atlantic Council (NAC), NATO's political body, authorized Solana to direct air strikes without further vote by the council.[65]

The NAC meeting was followed in February by a UN Security Council vote authorizing the use of air strikes for humanitarian protection. In the following month, representatives from the Belgrade government, the elected Kosovar government, the KLA, and other factions met, uneasily, in the Château de Rambouillet, southwest of Paris. Christopher Hill, the US ambassador to Macedonia, had worked tirelessly on a plan to divide authority over Kosovo into different levels of government for a three-year period, allowing Belgrade to retain national control in a revised federal arrangement. At the conference, Hill was joined by representatives of the European Union and the Russian Federation, and when these three could not reach agreement Hill went to see Milošević, after which the Yugoslav/Serbian representatives produced a lengthy document that was incompatible with the original proposal. Because of continued American reluctance to risk troops, the United States further muddied the waters at Rambouillet by trying to get the quietest sector of Kosovo for its occupation. The visible lack of enthusiasm among NATO allies only encouraged Serbian intransigence. The Kosovars signed that original agreement, which included an occupation force similar to that for Bosnia that would be followed in three years by a referendum. Yet nothing in the agreement guaranteed Kosovo statehood, an omission that permitted the Yugoslav government to retain nominal control. When Belgrade remained obdurate about the so-called Rambouillet Agreement, in March NATO's Solana finally instructed the SACEUR to begin bombing.[66] The patterns of American military personnel assignments meant that Wesley Clark, the staff officer who had planned the military aspects of the Bosnian intervention, would now direct the effort to impose similar controls on Kosovo.

Bombing Serbia and Kosovo

The effects of precision Western airpower in Iraq and Bosnia had made US, British, and other officials confident that the renewed NATO effort would promptly coerce the Serbs, and even Milošević had once expressed his apprehension of such weapons to Clark.[67] The activist governments were so confident that they pushed diplomacy to a crisis while General Clark, as SACEUR, directed a special two-day target list intended to force a prompt capitulation.[68]

Yet, Operation Allied Force in 1999 proved very different from Operations Deliberate Force and Desert Storm. Because the vital interests of the Yugoslav government were involved, Milošević was reluctant to concede; indeed, the air strikes only encouraged him to expedite attacks in Kosovo, causing more civilian casualties and refugees.[69] The Yugoslav populace generally blamed NATO rather than their own government for the attacks. The reluctance of some

NATO members placed significant restrictions on targeting, so that even Yugoslav telephone communications were off-limits. President Clinton insisted on personally reviewing NATO target lists, further delaying and complicating the process. Although political restraints loosened as the effort continued, the leaders of the United States, United Kingdom, and France each demanded a veto on targets. As commander of Allied Air Forces Southern Europe, Lt. Gen. Michael Short wished to implement USAF doctrine by attacking key governmental systems inside Serbia, while his superior, General Clark, wanted to focus on weakening the Yugoslav security forces inside Kosovo. The press echoed this disagreement, regularly asking how many Yugoslav tanks had been destroyed, a question that USAF commanders considered irrelevant to forcing compliance.[70]

Because Western leaders had expected a quick victory, NATO had only 214 strike aircraft at the start of operations (March 24, 1999) and took months to rise to a total of 539. The carrier *Theodore Roosevelt*, having been sent to the Red Sea for operations against Iraq, had to retrace its course before naval air could participate. In addition, Marine F/A-18s eventually deployed to Taszár, Hungary. Still, weather hampered the attacks; only seven of the first twenty-one days of bombing had favorable conditions.[71] Royal Navy Tomahawks and USAF air-launched cruise missiles took out some targets.[72] The deaths of some five hundred Serbian civilians aroused public criticism because of the exaggerated belief in the accuracy of PGMs, while the shoot-down of a "stealth" F-117 further tarnished the legend of US technological supremacy. US F-15s and a Dutch F-16 downed three Yugoslav MiG-29s, but that did not seem a sufficient trade-off for the loss of two NATO aircraft. Yugoslav air defenders "blinked" their radars on and off to acquire targets without offering an easy signal to attack; apparently electro-optical devices had tracked the F-117 when it went below the cloud level to acquire a target.[73]

As Allied Force continued apace, more than just the population and the aircrews came under stress. Some NATO members sought the impossible goal of zero civilian casualties, while others like France wanted to avoid destroying key facilities so as to hold them as a kind of threat for future bombing. In the United States, ground commitments had become so unpopular that the Clinton administration wanted to delay planning for the inevitable occupation force. Moreover, the reduced strength of American forces meant that deploying significant troops to Kosovo would leave the Defense Department hard-pressed to fulfill its contingency planning in the Persian Gulf and Korea (according to the 2MRC concept). By contrast, some of the European generals wanted to accept risks in this occupation in order to end the campaign more quickly. Playing on these divisions, President Milošević announced first a ceasefire and

then a partial troop withdrawal, even though no units actually redeployed. Meanwhile, although General Clark was both a NATO and a US regional commander, the Clinton administration tended to hold him at arm's length, trying to override NATO decisions with American ones while not allowing him to attend certain key meetings.[74]

Civilian casualties and other bombing errors occurred in part because the Serbs became adept at decoys and camouflage, having learned from the previous conflict. To avoid losing aircraft, the attackers were required to fly at or above 15,000 feet, an altitude that made target identification difficult. NATO had no friendly troops in contact, so its only means of locating Yugoslav weapons were early model Predator UAVs that could not identify but not laser-designate targets for attack by other aircraft. Only later, with the arrival of Task Force Hawk (see below), did NATO have target acquisition radars in Albania, where they could accurately locate Yugoslav artillery inside Kosovo.[75]

This improvement, in conjunction with a loosening of target restrictions and the escalation of air strikes, began to attrit the Yugoslav forces. B-52 strikes attempting to clear the Albanian border strongly hinted that NATO might provide direct support to the Kosovars or even invade.[76]

The public disavowal of any intention to deploy ground troops greatly simplified the Yugoslav defensive task by eliminating a serious option from NATO's arsenal. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, General Clark had considered the deployment of AH-64 attack helicopters and other troops not as a substitute for ground forces but rather as an additional form of deep air strike. When he requested permission to send such American forces, the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps all disagreed if only because there was no doctrine for the employment of attack helicopters without ground troops. Although NATO wished to locate this Task Force Hawk in Macedonia, the government of that new state demurred; ultimately, the task force ended up on a muddy Albanian airfield that was already crowded with humanitarian relief agencies. The defense secretary finally approved deployment on April 4.[77]

The original conception for TF Hawk was for twenty-four AH-64s, but the force grew as it acquired additional missions. Eventually, it also included various headquarters staffs, three EH-60 signals intelligence helicopters, nineteen other helicopters, and eighteen Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRS) to suppress Serbian artillery. Security grew to include both TF 1-6 Infantry (two M3 Bradley companies plus an M1 Abrams tank company), air defense and engineer elements, and the 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry. Near the Kosovar-Albanian border, almost 475 American soldiers set up a forward base. Although the primary purpose of the border base was to place a Q-37 radar where it could track Serbian artillery, this post also included a company team of

TF 1-6 Infantry, an MLRS battery, and two self-propelled howitzers.[78] Lt. Gen. John Hendrix, a gifted leader and planner, commanded this odd task force.

TF Hawk began to pose a significant threat to the Serbians inside Kosovo while collecting targeting information for the ongoing air strikes. In the process, however, two incidents tarnished the image of NATO and the US Army. Night aviation training is always hazardous, and there were two AH-64 crashes inside Albania. The second incident, in early May, killed both crew members.[79] The TF also lost several UAVs over Kosovo.

While NATO pressure on Belgrade mounted, there were other unfortunate incidents. The CIA had identified the Yugoslav Federal Directorate of Supply and Procurement as a warehouse involved in supplying missile parts to rogue nations as well as logistical support to the campaign in Kosovo. The exact location of this warehouse was misplotted, and the overworked intelligence community had neglected to update the "No Strike" list of facilities in Belgrade. A CIA analyst questioned the dubious location, but it remained in the database. On the night of May 7–8, the USAF launched Joint Direct Attack Munitions at the supposed warehouse, striking a Chinese embassy facility and killing three Chinese journalists. Beijing naturally assumed that the vaunted capacity of American intelligence could not have made an error of this magnitude, leading to a diplomatic incident with massive protests in China.[80]

Unlike the Arabian Peninsula, the Balkans presented a varied terrain and adverse weather that handicapped both the identification of targets and assessment of the resulting bomb damage. Yugoslav forces inside Kosovo operated in small, dispersed, combined arms teams of company size and practiced extensive deception and camouflage measures to obscure their strength. They located their command posts inside power stations, mines, and other sites that NATO was reluctant to bomb. Even a simulacrum of a NATO ground force would have forced these troops to redeploy into more targetable formations. Without that, targeting and BDA of these field units was difficult. American air intelligence had estimated that one-third of armored fighting vehicles and up to one-half of the artillery pieces in Kosovo had been destroyed, yet when the Serbian forces finally withdrew from Kosovo, they were in good order with few indications of weapons losses. A subsequent Operation Allied Force munitions effectiveness assessment could account for destruction of only 9 tanks (out of 1,025), 20 armored personnel carriers (out of 787), and 36 artillery pieces (out of 1,246).[81]

Stabilizing Kosovo

Nonetheless, sustained pressure including TF Hawk eventually prompted President Milošević to concede defeat, but even then the Russian Federation intervened to assist him. Moscow had been outraged by Operation Allied

Force, withdrawing its representative from NATO headquarters while Russian nationalists alleged wildly that the bombing was a rehearsal for an invasion of Russia.[82] Even when Belgrade bowed to reality, Yeltsin insisted that negotiations be conducted by an odd troika consisting of Ambassador Strobe Talbott (for the United States, former prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin (for Russia), and President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland (for the EU). The arrangement they finally negotiated neither detached Kosovo from Yugoslavia nor allowed for a referendum on independence. The NATO peacekeeping element, Kosovo Force (KFOR), would be subject to dual UN and NATO supervision.

General Clark wanted to follow the Dayton precedent, with any Russian element of KFOR being under NATO command, possibly with a Russian deputy at NATO headquarters. Yet there was no prior agreement to this, and indeed because of American reluctance the NATO military council had not even issued activation orders when on June 3 Milošević signaled that he would accept terms. KFOR was therefore not ready to deploy, nor had a detailed technical agreement been reached with the Serbs.[83] Moreover, Russian chief of the general staff Anatoly Kvashnin persuaded President Yeltsin to preempt NATO by moving a force of only two hundred Russian paratroopers from Bosnia to occupy the airfield outside Pristina, the capital of Kosovo. On June 11, with fifteen BTR armored personnel carriers, hastily relabeled "KFOR," this unit staked its claim to the airfield. Lt. Gen. Michael Jackson, the commander of the NATO Rapid Reaction Corps, declined General Clark's efforts to interdict this force, although he did authorize a nearby show of force to warn the Russians. Hungary refused overflight permission for the Russians to reinforce and resupply this force, leading to a standoff.[84]

Quite apart from Russia's grandstanding, the allied Reaction Corps moved cautiously into Kosovo. General Jackson signed a Military Technical Agreement with the JNA to facilitate the Yugoslav withdrawal. Then, on June 12, 1999, a British airborne brigade moved by helicopter to secure critical passes leading into the province. Eventually brigades from France, Italy, Germany, and the UK, as well as a US armored cavalry squadron and a composite Canadian mechanized task force, all flowed in. The degree to which post–Cold War budget cuts affected Western armies is illustrated by the fact that the Canadians had to rent a roll-on, roll-off ship to move their equipment and Russian-built air transports for their troops. Greek and US marine troops were added later, although Greek officers and police, sensitive about the newly independent Macedonia, tried to impede the off-loading of the Canadians in Thessaloníki and the subsequent helicopter movement across Greek territory.[85]

Given the civil war and bombing that preceded KFOR, humanitarian aid groups and military engineers had considerable work to do restoring civil life

in Kosovo. Continued American policy concerns about possible casualties resulted in severe limitations on what US troops did and where they would go, which placed a greater burden on other participants. Just as in Bosnia, the NATO troops had to deal with multiple violent groups within the shattered province. According to the final agreement, the KLA was to concentrate its heavy weapons at secure weapons storage sites and be transformed into the Kosovo Protection Corps, a combination of active-duty and militia forces to handle natural disasters and other emergencies. Instead, the KLA and its successor organization engaged in intimidation and protection rackets, while Serbs alleged widespread abuses of power. Except in the French sector, KFOR troops gradually shut down and arrested illegal "police" operations inside Kosovo. Serbian-backed mobs tested NATO restraint, trying to disrupt KFOR's control of the country for several years.[86] While most of the KFOR troops sought to avoid confrontations, the French did not hesitate to use tear gas against any crowd.

Assessment

The post-Yugoslav conflicts of the 1990s were a laboratory for the use of force after the end of the Cold War. The ability of ethnic extremists to circumvent and manipulate peacekeeping efforts only confirmed American reluctance to be involved in such missions. Democratic and especially Republican leaders emerged from the decade with a profound distaste for internal development and "nation building," a distaste that inhibited US involvement in NATO and motivated the hasty and slipshod American efforts to create successor governments in Iraq and Afghanistan. As General Clark observed, there was a "lack of a unified U.S. national strategy for dealing with the Balkans," and that lack spilled over into hesitation on the part of other NATO members.[87]

At the same time, the difficulties of Operations Deliberate Force and Allied Force faded quickly while the faith in PGMs as a coercive lever remained. Despite its difficulties, NATO's success through airpower gave the alliance and its military structure a renewed lease on life. Friction and misunderstandings between commanders and politicians were largely forgotten, leaving behind continued faith in the use of force even when investment in that force had been neglected.

CHAPTER 6

Undeclared Conflicts

Saddam and Osama in the 1990s

Despite the nominal ceasefire at the end of Operation Desert Storm, hostilities between Saddam Hussein's Iraq and the American-led coalition continued at a low level for another decade. A sort of new Cold War ensued before culminating in the "regime change" of Operation Iraqi Freedom (see chapter 8). During that same decade, the large Western military presence in Saudi Arabia helped provoke Osama bin Laden's terrorist campaign against the United States and its allies. These events appeared only intermittently in news accounts, but together formed the prologue to the ensuing War on Terror of the twenty-first century. Hussein and bin Laden had little in common in terms of their policies, and indeed bin Laden would have strenuously objected to Hussein's attempts to control the Muslim religion, but they shared a vaguely Pan-Arab, anti-Western emotional motivation. They also apparently shared a profound misunderstanding of America and the West.

Throughout this survey and especially this chapter, religiously based extremists appear frequently. To avoid even unintentional stereotyping, we must distinguish between Muslims of many different shades and *Islamists* who choose to interpret (and in many instances distort) that same faith as an excuse for violent extremism. Islamists are no more typical or representative of Islam than the Crusaders of a millennium ago represented all of Christianity.

Uprising in Iraq

Contrary to Western expectations, the defeat of 1991 did not result in the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, but that defeat *did* facilitate uprisings in both southern and northern Iraq. The Shi'a tribes of the marsh region in southeastern Iraq tried to exploit the regime's temporary weakness but were put down with Hussein's customary ruthlessness, a defeat undeterred by UNSCR 688 (April 5, 1991) that demanded he cease internal repression. Iraqi government persecution

and draining of the swamp areas caused a sharp reduction in the population of that region. In 1992, the United States cited UNSCR 688 and the Safwan ceasefire agreement as justification to implement Operation Southern Watch, a no-fly zone south of the 32nd parallel (extended in 1996 to the 33rd parallel). One reason for reconnaissance patrols in Southern Watch was to deter further Iraqi air action against the marsh tribes, although these patrols were not continuous and therefore could not completely prevent Iraqi flights in the area.[1]

In Iraqi Kurdistan, Saddam's defeat had reopened the intermittent struggle between Kurdish and government forces, causing at least 450,000 Kurds to flee into neighboring Turkey and Iran. Prime Minister Major proposed a safe haven to protect these displaced people and lobbied NATO to join him. After initial airdrops of food, British Royal Marines, Americans, Canadians and Dutch soldiers as well as some French and Italian paratroops moved into the Turkish-Iraqi border region in April 1991. USAF F-15s shot down two Iraqi aircraft and intimidated the pilot of a third into ejecting. This Operation Provide Comfort (British term Operation Haven) temporarily relieved the Kurdish suffering without resolving the basic conflict. A smaller interallied group of soldiers eventually withdrew to Incirlik Air Force Base to provide a reaction force while the air patrols—renamed Operation Northern Watch—helped deter further Iraqi action. In 1994, however, USAF aircraft misidentified two US Army helicopters involved in Provide Comfort as Iraqi and shot them down, killing twenty-six.[2] Despite or perhaps because of the Provide Comfort protective cloak, in 1996, one Kurdish faction (the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, or PUK) felt safe enough to invite Saddam's troops into the northern area to fight another faction (the Kurdistan Democratic Party, or KDP).

Throughout the decade, Operations Southern and Northern Watch continued an undeclared conflict with the Iraqi government. Each time the Iraqis fired air defense weapons at the air patrols, those patrols retaliated by bombing air defense systems or nearby military installations, gradually degrading the entire Iraqi defensive structure. Ordered by Baghdad to continue shooting at the air patrols, Iraqi air defenders sometimes fled their weapons after blindly launching a missile or pulling the lanyard on an unaimed antiaircraft gun. By the time of the 2003 invasion, Iraq's air defense system, already damaged during the 1991 air strikes, had become severely compromised.

Saddam meanwhile labored to rebuild his ground forces, transferring key weapons from the regular army to the Republican Guard and disbanding the 3rd (Tawakalna) Mechanized Division to bring the remaining units up to strength. In addition to refurbishing the Republican Guard combat units, the regime also formed a Special Republican Guard for palace security and similar functions in the capital region.

UN sanctions hampered but did not stop this process of rebuilding the armed forces. When the Oil-for-Food Programme permitted Saddam's regime to sell a limited amount of petroleum in return for imports of a humanitarian nature, Baghdad often paid inflated prices for those imports while demanding under-the-table kickbacks from suppliers. The Iraqi regime received at least $1.8 billion in kickbacks from both oil purchasers and goods suppliers, allowing it to finance various military and security programs.[3] The government also used legitimate oil-for-food money to purchase equipment for nominally civilian uses that could also be used militarily. For example, Baghdad acquired large numbers of "low boy" tractor-trailers, ostensibly to move bulldozers and other civilian construction equipment. These same trailers, painted in camouflage colors, were then used to relocate tracked armored vehicles from one part of Iraq to another without wear and tear on the tank treads.

Saddam attempted to outwait his critics and adversaries. The United States and United Kingdom carried the burden of continuous air patrols, generating 34,000 sorties annually, while these two nations plus Spain provided most of the naval assets to enforce UN import/export controls. Every six months, the participants had to persuade the UN Security Council as well as the Turkish legislature to reauthorize their efforts. Turkey had already suffered economically from the loss of Iraqi petroleum that had previously flowed northward. Add to that the Turkish distrust for any form of independent Kurdistan, and it seemed clear that Baghdad could reasonably expect the entire sanctions regime to collapse of its own weight.

Weapons of Mass Destruction

The Iraqi abuse of the Oil-for-Food Programme was part of a larger feud with the United Nations after the 1991 defeat. When the Baghdad government capitulated at the end of that conflict, Saddam's foreign minister, Tariq Aziz, had signed a message promising that his government would comply with all UNSC directives—but that compliance was grudging at best.

Baghdad had made no secret about Iraqi use of chemical weapons against both the Iranians and domestic opponents, especially the Kurds, during the 1980s, and it now encouraged rumors about the continuing existence of such weapons to discourage domestic resistance. Once the smoke cleared after Desert Storm, however, Western intelligence agencies were surprised to learn the extent of Iraqi investment in other weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including development of biological agents and attempts to enrich uranium to weapons grade.

UNSCR 687, dated April 3, 1991, demanded that Iraq provide an inventory of and destroy all chemical and biological weapons as well as all missiles with

a range of more than 150 kilometers (93 miles).[4] The United Nations Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) was formed to enforce these rules, while the International Atomic Energy Agency resumed inspections to bring Iraq back into compliance with its treaty obligations against military uses of nuclear materials.

These agencies had initial success in identifying and destroying prohibited materials despite Iraqi noncooperation. Between 1991 and 1994, Iraq destroyed, under UNSCOM supervision, more than 38,000 filled and unfilled bombs and shells, 690 tons of chemical agents, and other prohibited materials.[5] Yet, as time passed the Iraqi government increasingly resisted these inspections. By the mid-1990s, Baghdad was making extraordinary efforts to conceal its programs and evade inspections. Trying to bring inspections to an end, Saddam's regime repeatedly "certified" that it had destroyed all of its prohibited missiles and WMD. When inspectors noted discrepancies in these certificates, the Iraqis corrected the documents and then repeated their claims.[6] The Iraqi government blocked both ground and air movements of international inspectors and threatened to fire on reconnaissance overflights used to verify compliance. Tariq Aziz accused multiple UN inspectors of being American spies. In December 1998, UNSCOM came to a halt in the face of continued Iraqi intransigence.

The United States had launched periodic cruise missile attacks earlier in the 1990s; on June 26–27, 1993, for example, twenty-three Tomahawks struck Iraq after news leaked that the Baghdad regime had plotted to assassinate former president Bush.[7] Still, Operation Desert Fox on December 16–19, 1998, was the most significant air action between the 1991 and 2003 conflicts. Two hundred and fifty Tomahawk cruise missiles from US and British naval vessels as well as 90 air-launched missiles from USAF B-52s struck several of Saddam's palaces, air defense sites, suspected WMD facilities, and military installations. B-1B bombers flew out of Oman on their first combat mission. The USS *Enterprise* plus various bases in the region dispatched aircraft, including a dozen RAF Tornados, bringing the total to six hundred sorties. The actual effects of these strikes can only be conjectured, but they contributed to the ongoing degradation of Iraqi defense capabilities.[8]

Desert Fox fell between two stools. Its scope was insufficient to punish Saddam Hussein seriously yet more than enough to provoke partisan criticism of the Clinton administration. The Republican leader in the Senate, Trent Lott, openly expressed skepticism about the bombing, implying that, like the Defense Condition (DEFCON) 3 alert of US forces during the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, a president had engaged in a military gesture to distract attention from his domestic political problems. Not only is there no evidence of such a partisan

intent, but the continued presence of US military forces in the Middle East only fueled the resentment of radical groups, including al-Qaeda (see below).[9]

Outside of Iraq, politicians, journalists, and intelligence analysts became convinced that Saddam was still concealing significant portions of his weapons and missile programs.[10] Given Iraq's repeated use of chemical weapons in the past, there seemed to be no doubt that it still possessed such munitions. Indeed, right up until the 2003 invasion, the Iraqi government fostered this belief—although Baghdad publicly denied the presence of such weapons, it wished its enemies, both foreign and domestic, to believe that it still had poison gas. The insistence of other governments, especially the George W. Bush administration, that Iraq continued to possess these weapons only reinforced such belief among Saddam's generals. In a repressive regime where no one reported bad news honestly for fear of punishment, even Iraqi leaders lacked accurate knowledge of weapons development and inventory.[11]

Thought Control

Continued sectarian unrest gave the impression that Saddam Hussein was dealing with domestic opposition as well as Kurdish minorities and UN inspectors. Reality was at odds with this impression, however. During the late 1970s, Saddam had crushed the Shi'a Islamic Dawa Party, driving its leaders into exile.[12] Since the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s, the Iraqi regime had attempted to control religious thought in the country, including dictating the topics for weekly sermons and controlling attendance in theological schools. During the 1990s, Baghdad redoubled its control of religion, effectively silencing or co-opting many of its critics.

The Baghdad government promoted a generic form of Islam that gave a Sunni bias to both religion and history. In effect, Saddam's regime tried to impose the religious equivalent of Modern Standard Arabic, espousing a homogenized form of Islam that downplayed or ignored variations in the religion so as to portray Islam as a modernizing, sophisticated effort. Ba'ath ideology had often criticized Shi'a beliefs as being heavily influenced by Persian attitudes, instead insisting that the Islamic faith should support Pan-Arab unity. Throughout the 1980s, the regime arrested, executed, or exiled religious critics, then sponsored religious conferences and schools to counteract sectarian influence. Even Christians were expected to align with the regime.[13]

During the 1990s, the Shi'a threat in the south prompted the regime to tighten its control through a new Saddam University for Islamic Studies, police spies among the clergy, and restrictions on building permits for new mosques. The government permitted a Faith Campaign to encourage the religiosity of the general populace. This was not a turn toward Islamism but rather a campaign

to encourage loyalty to the regime. The Ba'athists depicted the Wahhabi sect of Sunni Islam, so dominant in Saudi Arabia that it nurtured the extreme attitudes of the young Osama bin Laden (see below), as secretly Jewish. Meanwhile, Iraqi government monitoring of sermons remained open and blatant, fostering fear of suppression.[14]

By the time the United States invaded in 2003, the clergy of Iraq had become highly politicized and self-conscious. The regime had assembled a body of Sunni and Shi'a religious leaders who publicly and in some cases privately supported the government. Any remaining critics of the regime, such as the Jordanian Islamist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, were controlled if not silenced. Americans might view Shi'a leaders as potential allies, but in fact the destruction of the Ba'ath regime freed these clerics to organize their followers into their own centers of theocratic power. After their defeat, the Sunni officials of the former regime believed that the Shi'a were actively cooperating with the invaders, further provoking civil war.[15]

Such civil strife was yet in the future when Osama bin Laden launched his most deadly attack on the United States, unwittingly giving Washington a pretext to undertake "regime change" in Iraq.

The Rise of al-Qaeda

In the 1740s, Mohammed Ibn Abd al-Wahhab began to advocate a reform of Islamic belief, arguing that only a return to strict monotheism and Sharia law could purify the religion.[16] Mohammed Ibn Saud adapted this movement, commonly known as Wahhabism, as a means to prop up the legitimacy of his rule. Subsequently, the House of Saud accorded special powers to advocates of Wahhabism, such that most residents of Saudi Arabia, including Osama bin Laden and his followers, were taught this moralistic, absolutist approach to Sunni Islam.

Osama bin Laden has become so famous that his story is well known. He was born in Riyadh in 1957, the son of a self-made construction contractor who became very influential with the royal family. Imbued with Wahhabi puritanism, Osama moved to Afghanistan full time in 1982. There he used his family connections to raise money and build military training camps to assist the mujahideen fighting the Soviet occupation. Bin Laden not only recruited religiously motivated fighters but kept a register (al-Qaeda, literally the base or foundation) of those who died fighting. Al Qaeda was not designed for terrorism of any kind, but it eventually developed functions in generating military force, raising funds, and disseminating propaganda. After some actual combat, including being wounded, bin Laden returned home but retained contacts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Like many others in the region, he regarded the

United States and especially the Central Intelligence Agency as malevolent actors. In 1990, when the Saud family invited US troops to the kingdom, Osama was profoundly shocked, assuming that this was a prelude to a Soviet-style occupation similar to that of Afghanistan.[17] It apparently never occurred to him that the United States had no interest in Saudi Arabia beyond obtaining oil and deterring aggression.

Although the vast majority of Western forces departed the Kingdom within a year of Desert Shield, some remained to conduct Operation Southern Watch and similar efforts to control Iraq. Osama recruited radical youths from various Arab countries and trained them in Afghanistan; the Egyptian government reportedly pressured Riyadh into revoking Osama's Saudi citizenship for his support of radicalism in Egypt. Rather than surrender to the Saudi government, Osama orchestrated an attack in Riyadh in 1995. The Saudi government's execution of four al-Qaeda operatives may have been the immediate provocation for Osama's bombing attack on the Khobar Towers on June 25, 1996.[18]

That building housed coalition personnel involved in the Southern Watch aerial patrols, allowing bin Laden to embarrass the House of Saud and strike against the American "occupiers" of the land of two holy sites. Nineteen US Air Force personnel died, and some four hundred persons of various nationalities were wounded. The US government and courts blamed Iran for the attack, probably because the Saudi government had no wish to acknowledge the actions of Osama bin Laden and other Saudi nationals. In August 1996, bin Laden, who by that time was living in Afghanistan, declared war on the United States in an interview published in London.[19] Such statements hampered the Taliban government's efforts to gain international acceptance, so in 1997 Mullah Mohammed Omar moved him to the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar.[20]

On August 7, 1998, truck bombs exploded outside the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, killing 224 and wounding 4,500, mostly local residents.[21] This time the United States correctly identified Osama bin Laden and his lieutenant, Muhammad Atef, as the planners of the attack, but authorities only apprehended a few lesser figures.

Bin Laden may have chosen the August date as the eighth anniversary of the US decision to send troops to Saudi Arabia. The Clinton administration fired cruise missiles against suspected terrorist targets in Sudan and Afghanistan, including suspected al-Qaeda training camps, but again was unable to strike a decisive blow. If anything, these missiles prompted Osama to reinforce his cave headquarters near Tora Bora in the Pamir Mountains of eastern Afghanistan, a site that became famous four years later during Operation Anaconda.[22]

President Clinton signed Executive Order 13099 on August 20, 1998, the same day as the cruise missile strikes in Sudan and Afghanistan. This EO authorized

sanctions against a variety of individuals and groups, including bin Laden and al-Qaeda, who were identified as interfering with the vaguely defined Middle East peace process.[23] This order authorized attempts to interfere with al-Qaeda funds, but chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Shelton demurred about the use of special operations forces against al-Qaeda, citing high risks and limited targeting intelligence.[24]

On October 12, 2000, a suicide bomb boat detonated against the hull of the destroyer USS *Cole* while it was refueling in the Port of Aden. By this time, the American intelligence community was well aware of al-Qaeda and was struggling to anticipate the next attack, including several false alarms about such attacks in port. Even before the *Cole* bombing, the Navy knew that the Port of Aden was a vulnerable anchorage, but sustained operations against Iraq (and to a lesser extent Iran) forced the Fifth Fleet to use all available support facilities. Twin blasts tore a forty-foot hole in the side of the *Cole* while killing seventeen American sailors and wounding more.

In June 2001, portions of Egyptian Islamic Jihad merged with al-Qaeda; Ayman al-Zawahiri, who had met bin Laden in Afghanistan, had extensive experience working against the Egyptian police. Henceforth, Zawahiri added his knowledge to improve AQ's planning and organization.[25]

Western intelligence services were at a disadvantage in dealing with secret conspiracies, especially when hostile states such as Iran seemed the more likely actors. Despite experiencing severe reductions in their budgets during the 1990s, the intelligence services retained vast technical capabilities. Yet understanding and thwarting terrorist groups, whether in Lebanon (see chapter 4) or Saudi Arabia, required agents who were integrated into those groups or had already fought in places such as Afghanistan or Bosnia. Failing that kind of access, intelligence analysts could only identify when conspirators were energized by the prospect of action, as indicated by "chatter" on the Internet or other forms of telecommunication. What they could rarely do was identify enough specifics—time, location, methodology—to anticipate and thwart an attack. For example, two months before the 9/11 attacks, Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet told the national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice, that another al-Qaeda attack was imminent, possibly in the United States.[26] By one count, the President's Daily Intelligence Brief mentioned al-Qaeda forty times in the eight months prior to 9/11, but the new administration had many other priority concerns, including a desire to settle accounts with Saddam Hussein.[27]

Coincidentally, the George W. Bush administration also was distracted by the April 1, 2001, Hainan Island incident, in which a Chinese J-8 fighter (a copy of a Soviet MiG-21) crashed into an American EP-3E signals intercept aircraft flying a routine collection mission approximately seventy miles (110 km) away

from the Chinese island. Severely damaged, the US aircraft had to perform an emergency landing on Hainan, where the Chinese government held its eleven-person crew for eleven days, demanding an (ambiguous) apology before releasing the crew while extensively examining the aircraft and its classified contents. This diplomatic crisis focused US government attention on an area far removed from the Middle East.[28]

In attempting to trace and thwart al-Qaeda, the intelligence community was further handicapped by a well-intentioned set of reforms imposed on it twenty-five years before. The Church Committee Senate hearings of 1975 had revealed numerous abuses of the intelligence community in violation of Americans' privacy. To prevent such abuses in the future, a set of executive orders and regulations put severe limits on FBI domestic surveillance while completely precluding such surveillance by any other intelligence agency, such as Army counterintelligence. This reform divided the intelligence community into two unequal pieces: the FBI and all the foreign-intelligence agencies. The latter were forbidden to possess any records, even names, of US persons, which made it difficult for the FBI to pass any warning information to other agencies even if the bureau were willing to endanger a developing court case by doing so. The foreign-intelligence agencies followed terrorists and other threats abroad, but only the FBI was permitted to track suspects once they entered the United States. As they crossed the US border in either direction, suspects would appear to one agency and disappear from another. Counterintelligence and counterterrorism were not the primary mission of the FBI, and work in these fields was not considered career-enhancing. Moreover, the outdated data systems of the FBI tied information on a particular suspect to the field office that originally identified him or her, making sharing of information even more difficult.[29] While by no means the only reason for the surprise of September 11, 2001, this division of the Intelligence Community was a key impediment that led to that surprise.

Chechens and Other Foreign Fighters

Bin Laden was far from alone in organizing militant Muslim fighters, just as the Americans, Saudis, and Israelis were not their only perceived opponents. Wahhabism and other forms of militant Islam exhorted the faithful to join the defense of Islam by supposedly defending against non-Muslims and especially "crusaders." In the 1990s and later, the Internet offered an unprecedented opportunity for Islamists and other radicals to locate and coordinate with like-minded people.[30] Peshawar, Pakistan, had been the hub of such activity during the 1980s and 1990s, and the Palestinian Abdullah Yusuf Azzam moved there to preach jihad. For a number of years, Osama bin Laden financed and facilitated

publication of Azzam's ideas. Eventually, however, Azzam not only quarreled with bin Laden but became the enemy of various moderate Arab states; he died in Peshawar on November 24, 1989, the victim of a second explosive device aimed at him.[31]

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan attracted many religiously motivated defenders from different nations. Some remained or returned, fighting under al-Qaeda's auspices to support the Taliban regime that came to power in the 1990s by claiming to represent a pure, fundamentalist tradition in Islam. The most famous such organization was the 55th Brigade, recruited by al-Qaeda and its affiliates, who also equipped the brigade with night vision devices and other advanced technology. Indeed, this military support was the bedrock reason why the Taliban refused to abandon al-Qaeda in the face of a US ultimatum after the 9/11 attacks. In addition, the Taliban leader Mullah Omar gained considerable prestige among Islamists from the fact that he sheltered the increasingly famous Osama bin Laden, even as the latter's statements continued to irritate Western governments.[32]

Veterans of the Afghan fighting, joined by other devout Muslims who felt they had missed that opportunity to fight the infidels, interjected themselves into other conflicts during the 1990s. Up to 2,000 such people went to Bosnia to resist the Serbs. Even when, as in Syria, the regime apprehended Islamist opponents, those opponents might eventually emerge from prison having been further radicalized and taught practical methods of fighting by their fellow prisoners.[33]

The long Russian struggle to retain control of Chechnya and neighboring Dagestan (see chapter 2) was complicated by the presence of Islamist "foreign fighters," many of them veterans of other insurgent causes, including Bosnia. Along with these foreign fighters came close relations with fundamentalist Iran (for Shi'a), Afghanistan, the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, and al-Qaeda, while Libya and a revised Pan-Turkish movement also became involved. The Islamists smuggled weapons and drugs throughout the region, contributing to the general disorder. During the 1990s, the Caucasus region became both a magnet and a training ground for jihadi extremists, some of whom were then exported to groups such as the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Israel or even the 55th Brigade in Afghanistan.[34]

Foremost among the jihadist leaders of Chechnya was Shamil Basayev, a former assistant to the country's president who renamed himself Samir Abdallah Shamil Abu-Idris. During the late 1990s, most of his militant attacks occurred within Chechnya and Dagestan. After the Russian conventional military almost leveled Grozny in early 2000, however, Basayev launched a number of spectacular terrorist attacks inside the Russian Federation. On October 23–26,

2002, Basayev's nephew led some forty–sixty terrorists, including women wired with explosives, who seized the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow, containing 850 hostages. Russian OMON counterterrorism troops pumped an unknown chemical agent (possibly the hallucinogen BZ) into the building, reportedly incapacitating if not poisoning the occupants, after which the soldiers recaptured the building at a cost of fifty terrorists and ninety hostages.[35] Almost two years later, on September 1–3, 2004, Chechen terrorists seized a public school in Beslan, North Ossetia, about eighty miles (128 km) west of Grozny. This time the outcome was even more deplorable; when security forces stormed the building, 334 civilians, mostly children, and all but one of the terrorists died while the building itself was gutted by fire.[36]

Basayev planned an even bolder attack to occur in July 2006 when the leaders of the G-8 were scheduled to meet in Saint Petersburg. To distract attention from that target, on June 8 Basayev's agents attacked the Russian Embassy in occupied Baghdad, killing one and taking four hostages who were later beheaded on camera because of Russia's continued occupation of Chechnya. By this time, however, both Western and Russian agents had penetrated the mujahideen councils, learning that the rebels in Chechnya had asked al-Qaeda to provide fuses and other explosive materials for the projected Saint Petersburg attack. An agent of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) planted a remote-control device in the shipment, after which the Russians tracked the transport with an unmanned aerial vehicle and detonated the explosives on July 10, 2006, killing Shamil Basayev.[37]

Even before 9/11 and these other spectacular attacks, terrorism and self-appointed terrorists were on the rise. During the 1990s, the rapid growth of the Internet helped radical extremists of all colors locate and communicate with each other. The 9/11 attacks, plus in some instances al-Qaeda financial aid, inspired "wannabe" imitators throughout the Middle East and as far away as West Africa (see chapter 9), Indonesia, and the Philippines. This phenomenon reached a crescendo after 2010 with the recruitment of the self-described Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Iraq and Syria (ISIS; see chapter 11), but even before that, would-be jihadists and martyrs were seeking each other out, attempting to disrupt their societies.

CHAPTER 7

9/11 and Afghanistan

The al-Qaeda attacks of September 11, 2001, are so well known that they need little description or explanation. Teams of four or five mujahideen hijackers each seized four jetliners, filled with passengers and fuel. Two of these aircraft deliberately flew into the World Trade Center towers in New York City, while a third crashed into the western face of the Pentagon. By sheer coincidence, that portion of the Pentagon building had just undergone renovations including shatterproof glass, which reduced casualties inside, although the impact caused air ducts to discharge accumulated dust even on the far side of the vast building. Courageous passengers forced the fourth hijacked aircraft to crash fatally near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Total casualties are frequently debated but included more than 2,900 dead and perhaps twice that number injured, not including the stress and respiratory damage suffered by rescue workers.

Uncertain as to the extent of the immediate threat, the Bush administration implemented continuity of government plans. The armed forces assumed DEFCON 3, and reservists found themselves recalled to man various alternate command and intelligence facilities.[1] President Bush, who at the time was visiting Florida, flew to the Strategic Command headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, while Atlantic Command sortied carriers to place more fighter aircraft off New York City.[2]

The intelligence reservists were part of a larger force, mobilized on "hip pocket" (contingent or predesignated) orders in the first weeks of the crisis. By December 5, the Army National Guard and Army Reserve had mobilized 16,258 soldiers as both individual reservists and various units, primarily for security. The air force called up 227 units, of which 54 were for airlift.[3]

In 1949, the United States had committed itself to defend Europe through the North Atlantic Treaty or Treaty of Washington. Article 5 of that treaty obligated all signatories to regard an attack on any of them in Europe or North America as an attack against all. Ironically, the first instance where that article

was invoked was to defend the United States, rather than Europe, in response to the 9/11 attacks. NATO Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft guarded American skies for weeks after the hijackings while commercial aircraft remained grounded.

Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet and other officials immediately concluded that the hijackings were the work of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, and they urged action to support the so-called Northern Alliance, an opposition group fighting the Taliban government in northern Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the issue was complicated by the fact that the president and most of his political appointees were fixated on overthrowing the government of Saddam Hussein, claiming without evidence that these religiously motivated attackers must be allied with the secular fascist Saddam. By September 12, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was advising the president to bomb Iraq because there were so few lucrative targets in Afghanistan, even though the latter country was sheltering bin Laden.[4]

War on Terrorism in Afghanistan

Attacking Afghanistan meant first obtaining bases and permission to fly into (and launch missiles over) neighboring countries. Air strikes in turn necessitated access for USAF Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) helicopters to be in place to rescue downed aircrew. American diplomatic pressure and expanded foreign aid quickly gained cooperation from several neighboring states, particularly because Vladimir Putin's Russian government, which shared American antagonism toward Islamic terrorists, supported Washington's requests. The most significant result of these efforts was American use of the former Soviet air base at Karshi-Khanabad (colloquially known as K2) in southern Uzbekistan.[5]

Afghanistan's most powerful neighbor, Pakistan, had a troubled history with the United States. Washington had restricted aid to and through that country once the Soviets were defeated in Afghanistan, and the US Congress further limited weapons sales to Pakistan because it was developing nuclear weapons. More immediately, in line with its ongoing antagonism toward India, the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) regularly aided and trained radical groups located inside Afghanistan. The dictator of Pakistan, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, quickly recognized that his own country's best interests would be served by providing aid and access to the United States; that decision did not mean, however, that the ISI completely abandoned its support for Islamist terrorists.[6]

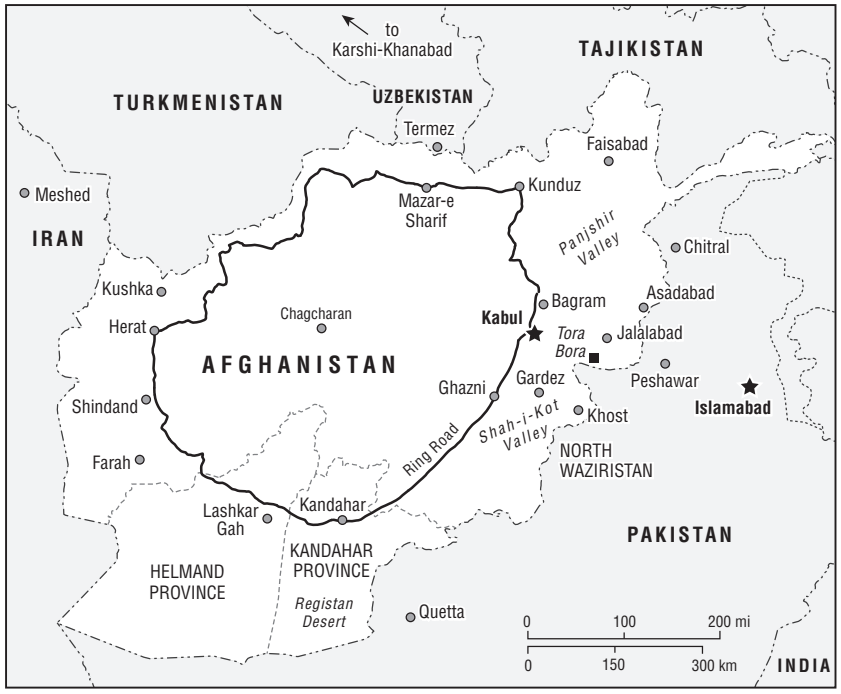
Afghanistan already possessed a justified reputation as a difficult country to control. The geography physically impeded movement and maneuver, not only

because of its harsh terrain but because low air density at higher altitudes limited the lift of helicopters and other aircraft, not to mention posing a physical challenge to anyone not acclimated to that altitude. As a landlocked country surrounded by other states, Afghanistan did not lend itself to the application of American sea or air power. The Soviet invasion and ensuing civil conflicts had left the main highway, the so-called Ring Road, potholed and most other infrastructure destroyed. Building any kind of modern nation out of a dozen different ethnic or religious groups was problematic; Pashtuns, the largest faction, made up only 40 percent of the population.[7]

For centuries, the various ethnicities within the country had combined the physical toughness needed to live there with a mastery of rifled weapons and a fierce resistance to all foreign presence. Afghans provided effective soldiers to both their own and neighboring regimes, but their internal divisions limited real unity.[8] The Soviet intervention had shattered the ethnic balances within the Afghan government. During the 1990s, the Taliban had irritated some Afghans with their puritanical and repressive control, but at least that control had brought some peace and order to much of a country weary after more than a decade of war with the Soviets and their satellite government.

The remote, difficult terrain of Afghanistan and the absence of nearby basing argued against a conventional force buildup as had been done in Desert Shield. Moreover, Rumsfeld had become defense secretary (for the second time, having held the same position briefly under President Ford) convinced that a combination of special operations forces (SOF), precision-guided munitions, and support to local forces could achieve victories with limited deployment of Western ground troops. Even before 9/11, Rumsfeld wanted to reduce further the number of active army divisions from ten to eight, using the personnel savings to create more SOF. The army chief of staff, Gen. Eric Shinseki, opposed such reductions, which brought down the secretary's wrath on his head.[9] In the long run, Shinseki's retention of the additional conventional units in the force structure greatly facilitated the army's effort to sustain decades-long deployments of troops to both Afghanistan and Iraq. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, however, Afghanistan appeared to offer a test case for Secretary Rumsfeld's conception of SOF and PGMs enabling local forces. As commander of CENTCOM, Gen. Tommy Franks designed a plan to use these elements to overthrow the Taliban, but the plan did not and perhaps could not foresee the ways that overthrow would stabilize the ethnically fractured country.[10]

The intended beneficiary of American support was the Northern Alliance, more formally the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, a loose confederation of anti-Taliban Tajiks, Uzbeks, and others led by Ahmed Shah Masoud, a former Afghan defense minister before the Taliban takeover.



Afghanistan, 2001. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

The CIA had repeatedly sent teams to meet with Masoud in the Panjshir Valley of northeastern Afghanistan. Yet, giving significant aid to Masoud met with opposition both in Washington and from the head of the ISI, Lt. Gen. Mahmoud Ahmed. The project had languished until two days before the 9/11 attacks, when al-Qaeda agents posing as journalists assassinated General Masoud. Mohammed Fahim Khan succeeded Masoud as leader of his unstable coalition, but the US–Northern Alliance relationship needed to be rebuilt before US forces could intervene to support the alliance.[11]

On September 26, 2001, a seven-man CIA team code-named Jawbreaker flew into the Panjshir Valley on a refurbished MI-8 helicopter from the Soviet era. Despite the high priority attached to supporting the Northern Alliance, no military liaison officers were available to accompany this team, an omission that made subsequent coordination with the Defense Department more difficult.[12] Jawbreaker experienced significant problems in facilitating the deployment of Special Forces A-teams to work with the Afghan opposition to the Taliban. Opposition commanders did not want American special operations soldiers to wear uniforms, which would not only attract enemy fire but expose the Northern

Alliance to criticism that it was controlled by or dependent on foreigners. The commander of Task Force Dagger, the SOF element operating from the air base in Uzbekistan, understood the need for American soldiers to blend in with others, but for legal considerations the soldiers had to deploy in uniform. More seriously, both that task force and other American staffs involved in the effort repeatedly chose deployment locations and launched insertion missions without coordinating with the Afghan commanders. The American commanders were under enormous political pressure from the president and especially the defense secretary to put troops on the ground and report precise daily metrics about their progress, but the failure of coordination between Jawbreaker and TF Dagger hampered the effort to work with the Afghan opposition. In mid-October, three A-teams (Operational Detachment A, or ODA) arrived—two in the north and one near Kandahar in the southwest—amidst some confusion about deployment and purpose. At one point, the Afghan opposition commanders demanded that one of these teams be withdrawn, because they believed that the local commander would receive an unfair share of whatever supplies and support the Americans provided. Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum defused some of this unhappiness by inviting his rivals to supervise the distribution of whatever supplies were air-dropped to ensure equity.[13] This quibbling over the "spoils" of working with the Americans foreshadowed the continuing issue of US funding of warlords in post-Taliban Afghanistan.

Eventually, at least eleven special operations elements, primarily A-teams, were deployed inside Afghanistan, usually in pairs. Two pairs operated in the north, facilitating local resistance forces advancing on Mazar-e-Sharif and Kunduz, where a thousand foreign fighters made a final stand. Another pair supported the advance southward toward Kabul, and a fourth pair in the southwest concentrated on Kandahar. In December, an additional ODA plus a separate team of forty special operators from various organizations infiltrated near the al-Qaeda bunkers of Tora Bora on the Pakistani border (see below).[14]

Perhaps most serious of all were misunderstandings concerning the missions of these teams. American planners apparently envisioned Special Forces performing their doctrinal mission of training and organizing local forces, a task that seemed insulting and unnecessary with regard to the Afghan opposition that had been operating in the field for decades. Instead, what local commanders wanted, in addition to supplies, was fire support, especially American bombing missions to give them an advantage on the battlefield. Moreover, American financial and weapons support bolstered the influence of traditional warlords in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Many of these American-supported groups were tactically effective but casually oppressed female Afghans in the same manner as the Taliban.[15]

Air support was in particularly short supply during the fall of 2001, in part because the Afghan situation did not fit the model of an advanced state used in Iraq and former Yugoslavia. When one of the few American scholars of the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan spoke to a group of air force officers in the Pentagon immediately after 9/11, he attempted to explain the geographic, ethnic, and cultural issues of the country, issues that later became critical to Afghan stabilization. A lieutenant general interrupted him demanding, "Just tell me the 80 places I have to destroy."[16] This was just one of the earliest instances of American military approaches that failed to understand the nuanced local situation.

Precision-guided munitions began targeting Afghan air defense and command installations on October 7, but even on the first night the attacks did not engage some priority targets identified by CENTCOM.[17] In another episode of the continuing disagreement between ground and air commanders, air force planners devoted most available sorties to striking what they perceived as key targets in a state that was so primitive that conventional analysis rarely applied. In late October, one of the first bombs (a GBU-31) allocated to ground support was misdirected when the USAF tactical control sergeant with the southern team provided the wrong coordinates to a B-52 crew; the resulting strike accidentally killed three American and five opposition soldiers. Hamid Karzai, the local commander and future head of the Afghan government, escaped with only minor injuries.[18]

Fortunately for the future of the budding alliance, on October 30 the Northern Alliance's General Fahim met in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, with General Franks of CENTCOM. When Franks urged Fahim to advance on Kabul, the Afghan commander replied that, in addition to more funds, he needed air support to crack the Taliban defenses without major friendly casualties. Two days later, Franks arranged a dramatic increase in bombing sorties in the north, including the use of 15,000-pound BLU-82 "Daisy Cutter" devices on November 10. Still, Franks's planners were dubious about the Northern Alliance's motives, demanding and getting promises that it would not lay waste to Kabul when it entered the capital. This policy concern resulted in still further delays to obtain bombing support on the front north of Kabul. In mid-November, limited American air helped the Afghans finally break through to take Kabul, while Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum combined air support and a horse cavalry charge to take Mazar-e-Sharif.[19] The warlords seized choice neighborhoods of the capital for themselves. The United States also began to air-drop rations and other humanitarian supplies in hopes of weaning the public away from the Taliban.

Meanwhile, General Franks used other special operations forces to help disrupt the Taliban. On the night of October 19–20, 2001, two separate attacks occurred. Two Ranger companies landed on a paved airstrip code-named Rhino,

located in the Registan Desert of southwestern Afghanistan. Once secured, this base not only served as a refueling point but permitted the 15th Marine Amphibious Unit to deploy by air. At the same time, MH-47 helicopters transported Delta Force troops of Task Force Gecko from the carrier USS *Kitty Hawk* to the Kandahar compound of Mullah Omar. During the initial operations, there were two helicopter mishaps, resulting in several fatalities. In addition to seeking intelligence information, this raid, like the seizure of Rhino, aimed to demoralize the Taliban by demonstrating the reach and firepower of American forces.[20]

Although there was no official ceiling on the number of American troops in Afghanistan, both General Franks and Secretary Rumsfeld consistently pressed to hold this number to an absolute minimum. Many American planners believed that a large American presence would arouse local nationalist resentment, while Rumsfeld's conception called for a small force leveraging local efforts. The defense secretary was wise enough to fear the effects of a prolonged deployment, but his desire to minimize forces on the ground contributed to a force structure that was inadequate to achieve rapid success and stability.[21] When the 10th Mountain Division headquarters deployed to Karshi-Khanabad, it was forced to leave behind its Tactical Air Control Party, while later units had to identify individual soldiers, such as repair parts clerks, to cut from the movement in order to reach artificial troop ceilings.[22] In the long run, this emphasis on minimal manning left the American force and especially American headquarters in Afghanistan ill-prepared to conduct the complex operations that followed the initial victories. (The same issue of the arbitrary slashing of manning levels raised its head again in the buildup for Iraq.) Recalling the difficulties that US division headquarters had experienced trying to function as combined and joint headquarters in Somalia and elsewhere, the designation of a constrained 10th Mountain headquarters (Task Force Mountain) as a CJTF was problematic at best. As one observer described the situation in early 2002, the limited deployment ceilings imposed by US officials meant that "Afghanistan had a half-strength headquarters with an unclear mandate."[23]

Despite its initial successes, the Western intervention faced a more serious challenge as it entered southern Afghanistan, where the Northern Alliance, which contained large groups of Tajiks and Uzbeks, was likely to alienate the Pashtun majority. This reinforced the importance of having Pashtun leaders such as Karzai involved in the struggle against the Taliban. However, the hastily recruited forces in southwestern Afghanistan lacked discipline and experience, and at one point in late November they suddenly abandoned the A-team supporting Karzai. Only airpower held off the Taliban/al-Qaeda forces until these irregulars returned without explanation the next day and continued the advance toward Kandahar.[24] Meanwhile, the improvised American-Afghan

campaign continued; one National Security Council staff analyst later described the situation bitterly: "With little actionable intelligence, no organized resistance movement, incredibly unforgiving terrain and substantial indigenous ideological support for the Taliban and al-Qaeda, creating a strategy for southern Afghanistan represented a tremendous challenge. So the White House ignored it [the challenge]."[25]

Overcoming such challenges, the campaign proved remarkably successful, in large measure because significant portions of the Afghan population were offended by the Taliban theocracy and troubled by the economic weakness of their country. Even the well-intentioned Taliban effort to ban opium farming had increased dissatisfaction while harming the economy.

In late November, as the Taliban regime began to collapse, General Musharraf apparently asked, through Vice President Cheney, that the United States open an air corridor so that Pakistan could evacuate its trainers and agents from the Kunduz airport. Not only Pakistanis, but several thousand al-Qaeda and other foreign militants as well as Taliban leaders apparently escaped in that manner, much to the fury of the Northern Alliance and counterterrorism analysts.[26] If the primary purpose of Operation Enduring Freedom was to apprehend terrorists and deny Afghanistan as a terrorist haven, this effort to accommodate the new Pakistani ally cost the United States dearly. The four hundred Taliban fighters who failed to escape from Kunduz ended up in the Qala-i Jangi prison, where their mistreatment prompted a prisoner revolt only suppressed by air strikes.[27]

After losing Kandahar the Taliban leaders attempted to negotiate some form of political future in Afghanistan. The Bush administration, however, rejected that effort because the Taliban seemed so closely linked to terrorism.[28]

Government and Command

The Bush administration had no intention or desire to rule Afghanistan either temporarily or as a de facto colony. Instead, just as in the subsequent Iraqi operation, Bush and his senior subordinates genuinely believed in rapidly evacuating the country while turning power over to a local democratic government—yet they wanted a government they could control. It would be no mean feat to establish such a government in a nation that had a very different experience of democracy, based on consensus rather than ballots, and was moreover divided into multiple tribal and linguistic factions. Just as in former Yugoslavia, many factions were far more concerned with their own interests than with the overall safety and future of Afghanistan as a whole.

At the behest of the Security Council and under diplomatic pressure from Washington, interested nations sent representatives to Bonn, Germany, to

discuss the future of Afghanistan. On November 14, 2001, this group decided to create an Afghan Interim Authority while planning for the former king of the country to convene a loya jirga, or traditional assembly, that would in turn create a new constitution and government.[29] On December 22, American influence overrode the desires of the Afghans in Bonn, ensuring that Hamid Karzai became chair of the Afghan Interim Authority pending the loya jirga. The latter body met in June 2002, with a membership of 1,500 intended to not only give legitimacy to the new government but also include major warlords and ethnic groups that might otherwise oppose the results. The meeting was not entirely peaceful, with a few militiamen being disarmed or attacked and at least sixty members walking out in protest.[30] The loya jirga reappointed Karzai to head the interim government and began the process that produced a constitution in January 2004.[31] Elections in October 2004 made Karzai the president of the new regime, although there were inevitably issues of voting irregularities in a state more concerned with tribal than individual rights.

Forming a new central regime did not fill the governmental vacuum nor repair the infrastructure damaged by two decades of warfare. From the moment that ODAs began to arrive in the country, US forces attempted to deliver food and other relief supplies to the public, but they had only mixed success. Taliban suspicions and obduracy—including taking hostages from Médecins Sans Frontières that were only there to help people—had driven most of the nongovernmental aid organizations out of the country, so the US military initially had to undertake such tasks, including distribution of aid, single-handed. The US Army's 96th Civil Affairs Battalion formed ten small Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells (CHLCs), often colocated with A-teams near cities, with a Combined Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF) overseeing them. When traditional NGOs returned to Afghanistan at a later date, they objected strongly to the CHLCs that were disbursing small grants and sometimes wearing civilian clothes, attire that potentially would make them indistinguishable from the NGO workers themselves. Moreover, NGOs accustomed to getting support from civil-military operations centers in other countries found that the CJCMOTF was not organized to do this in Afghanistan. In 2002, a UN Assistance Mission and a British civil-military structure arrived with overlapping functions that further confused the NGOs. Despite these difficulties, various forms of aid made significant improvements in 2002; by May, the United States alone had disbursed $2.56 million to rebuild roads, bridges, schools, medical facilities, and irrigation systems.[32]

Such a major influx of cash by both governments and NGOs not only encouraged corruption but distorted the Afghan economy and society. NGOs hired

local personnel by paying up to twenty times the average salary for government workers, attracting skilled managers at the long-term expense of the government and economy. Humanitarian aid reinforced Afghanistan's dependence on foreign food supplies but undercut local farmers who were therefore more likely to turn to growing opium.[33]

The American Combined Joint Task Force Phoenix, with help from allies and the 1st Battalion, 1st Special Forces Group, worked to build a new Afghan National Army (ANA), but the Karzai government wanted to rush formation of a 200,000-man force at a point where the coalition was still training the first three battalions. Loyalties to former warlords and ethnic/tribal divisions among recruits caused considerable attrition among trainees.[34]

The Bush administration's determination not to engage in "nation building" led it to focus almost exclusively on security forces. The new regime needed an almost equal number of police and border guards, yet creating effective units of this kind proved even more challenging than building the ANA. Given previous American failures in developing indigenous police forces in Somalia and Haiti, Germany's agreement to undertake this task seemed a godsend. (The Italian government also attempted to establish a legal system, while the UK tried to reduce the narcotics trade and the Japanese worked with little success to disarm and disband local militias.)[35] In retrospect, the German public and perhaps its government misunderstood what policing would mean in a country with an active insurgency and no tradition of respect for governmental authority. Police units needed considerable firepower to secure their areas and often experienced friction with local elders (see below.)

Anaconda and Beyond

With most of the country in the hands of the Northern Alliance and their allies, CENTCOM became understandably concerned about the need to defeat and apprehend remaining al-Qaeda elements, especially a group of up to 1,000 Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters located in the fortified positions of the Shah-i-Kot Valley, close to the Afghan-Pakistani border and the famous Khyber Pass; the more common label of "Tora Bora" refers to a cave system in the valley. During the Soviet-Afghan conflict, Osama bin Laden had used his familiarity with construction to improve the natural defenses of the region, turning it into a logistical hub for the opposition. The suspected presence of these combatants lent a sense of urgency to exploring the valley.

After several previous engagements in the area, Operation Anaconda began on March 2, 2002, and continued as a disjointed series of firefights over the next two weeks. The operation has been exhaustively analyzed as the first serious battle by American units in Afghanistan,[36] a complex series of events whose

full details exceed the scope of these work. Still, this battle illustrates a number of issues that were inherent in the way the intervention had occurred.

First was the American dependence on specific Afghan military groups. The Northern Alliance consisted largely of non-Pashtun groups, which offended the Pashtun plurality within Afghanistan. This also irritated the Pakistani government, which had little influence on such groups. The Southern Alliance, on which the United States relied to both pressure their opponents and block escape from the Shah-i-Kot Valley, was primarily Pashtun. It was subdivided into various militia groups that were supposed to form a blocking force to prevent enemy escape toward Pakistan; however, in practice they had difficulty getting into position or coordinating with other entities. The American chain of command for these units was convoluted, running from the 10th Mountain Division headquarters (Task Force Mountain, designated a CJFLC) through Joint Special Operations Task Force–North (JSOTF-N, 5th Special Forces Group, plus various attachments, including the Australian Special Air Service Task Force 64) to Joint Special Operations Task Force–South (JSOTF-S, under operational control of JSOTF-N). This last was a joint and combined organization including 3rd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group, plus US Navy SEAL teams and special operators from Germany, Denmark, France, and Norway. Three of the ten American ODAs were supporting the Southern Alliance militia groups.[37]

The shoestring, selective deployment of American conventional forces to Afghanistan also hampered Operation Anaconda. The principal American maneuver force was built around the headquarters of 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. This brigade was designated as Task Force Rakkasan, so named because that brigade had assumed the lineage of the 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment. Yet the scattered and partial deployment of American forces meant that this brigade including only one battalion (1st Battalion, 187th Airborne) of its three habitual infantry elements, with another battalion dedicated to security missions elsewhere. Instead, TF Rakkasan controlled two other maneuver elements: the 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry (from 10th Mountain Division) and the 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (3 PPCLI). The 1-87 Infantry had only three of its usual four companies, while the highly trained Canadians were hampered by US intelligence regulations that restricted the exchange of classified information with other nationalities. More serious was the shortage of helicopter transport and organic fire support: just as in Somalia, restricted strategic lift had denied the brigade its habitual direct support artillery battalion, while the 1-87 deployed with 81 mm mortars but only one of its longer-range 4.2-inch (107 mm) tubes.[38]

The operation got off to a horrible start on March 2, 2002, when an AC-130 gunship with malfunctioning GPS equipment misidentified one of the

Southern Alliance truck convoys, including several members of ODA 372, as a Taliban convoy, killing three and wounding fifteen. Chinook helicopters that had just landed the first wave of American infantry in the valley evacuated some of these casualties, but it was a demoralizing loss. Soon thereafter, only seven JDAMs were available to support another Southern Alliance attacks in the area; these bombs merely alerted the Taliban defenders without neutralizing them.[39]

Upon landing, 1-87 and 1-187 Infantry became engaged with various defenders. Well-trained Taliban with 82 mm Soviet-era mortars pinned down some of the Americans. A B-52 strike as well as attack helicopters enabled the infantry to hold their own and consolidate, but in the process five of the six Apaches were significantly damaged and had to return to base. That evening, effective AC-130 fire suppressed enough of the defenders to permit the evacuation first of casualties and then of 1-87 Infantry, which withdrew to Bagram Air Base to reorganize.[40]

By the time the operation resumed on the night of March 3–4, the deputy commander of the JSOTF in the area had decided to replace US Army Special Forces reconnaissance teams, which were seeking to locate key enemy leaders, with two SEAL teams intended for assault more than reconnaissance. More significantly, the SEAL commander established a special communications link with the JSOTF and chose his own insertion point, effectively cutting the army on-scene commanders out of the loop. The SEAL insertion was delayed by an engine malfunction on a CH-47, and when the aircraft belatedly attempted to land on high ground the next morning, it encountered defenders whose RPGs brought down one of the helicopters after one of the SEALs had slid from the tail of the aircraft. USAF combat search and rescue accompanied by part of a Ranger quick reaction force scrambled in an effort to recover the lost special operators. Regrettably, this rescue force suffered six additional fatalities.[41]

On March 4–6, while TF 1-187 continued to consolidate and clear its portion of the valley, TF 1-87, or Summit, reinforced with two other companies and additional mortars, returned to the area and struggled up to the high ground of Takur Ghar, east of the Shah-i-Kot Valley. From there, its mortars were able to interdict enemy efforts to evacuate supplies from the area.

At the same time, the extensive air support involved in earlier operations encouraged the Pashtun militia forces of Zia Loden that were preparing to search out Taliban in the area. A primarily Tajik force led by Gul Haidar, including four T-54 tanks, six BMP infantry fighting vehicles, and truck-mounted rockets, arrived on March 8 at the northern entrance to the valley. The mutual suspicion between Tajiks and Pashtuns made coordination difficult, but on March 11, air strikes signaled the start of their attack, with Pashtuns moving

eastward while two poorly concentrated Tajik columns pressed south. At one point, Haidar's Tajiks almost engaged an American company of TF Summit by mistake, but the sweep came to a successful conclusion on March 12.[42]

Although this marked the formal end of the ill-fated operation in the Shah-i-Kot, further efforts to clear this area continued for months. The 2nd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, designated Task Force Commando, assumed control of tactical operations. It employed 3 PPCLI, reinforced by a company of the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry, and with aviation support of a composite USA-USMC force controlled by the marine HMM-165 squadron. The 4-31 Infantry headquarters succeeded 3 PPCLI on March 18, 2002. In a series of sweeps in the same area, coalition troops gradually cleared forty-one caves (including supply caches) and multiple defensive positions. In the process they killed several hundred al-Qaeda and Taliban troops at a cost of seventy coalition killed and wounded.[43] Collectively, these operations hampered opposition infiltration and supply operations in southern Afghanistan, but the new Afghan government rarely had more than tenuous control over the border area.

Building a State without a Nation

Over the next several years, the new Afghan government attempted to build an effective state. There was some progress, in the sense of organizing central ministries and broadening public education to include women, although the latter trend inevitably offended cultural conservatives. The infant mortality rate in Afghanistan was cut by 50 percent during the first two decades of the twenty-first century. By the end of 2002, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were functioning in each of the provincial capitals. These PRTs included significant manning by American, German, and Dutch soldiers and civilians; the PRTs had proliferated small grants and contracts to repair the most pressing infrastructure needs of the country.[44] However, some observers later criticized the PRTs for their difficulties in understanding local needs and culture.[45]

Almost unconsciously, the formation of interagency PRTs effectively committed the United States to "nation building," precisely what the Bush administration wanted to avoid. The German government in particular supported this effort in civil-military relations. The subsequent shift of Washington's attention from Afghanistan to Iraq allowed the commitment to a pluralistic Afghan government to grow without clear policy decisions in Washington.[46]

An effective and legitimate national government required a level of security and order that was rarely possible. At its most basic, the American objective of denying sanctuary to al-Qaeda and other extremists meant an open-ended commitment to securing Afghanistan, a commitment that successive

American administrations sought to avoid or downplay.[47] Coalition forces rarely had sufficient numbers to provide effective security and counterinsurgency in rural areas.

The al-Qaeda extremists were primarily Arab outsiders in Afghanistan. By contrast, the Taliban were too ingrained within Afghan society to be eradicated easily.[48] Having withdrawn from Afghanistan in early 2002, the Taliban organized a council of elders in Quetta, Pakistan, and a year later they began infiltrating back into the country. President Musharraf permitted US unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs; aka, inaccurately, "drones") to operate over the tribal areas along the Pakistani-Afghan border, but the ISI continued to shelter and support the Taliban, passing them information concerning American movements. Coalition efforts to stop the infiltration were only partially successful.[49] Once back in the country, the extremist former rulers of Afghanistan used lavish supplies of explosives to inflict casualties not only on the highways but even within villages, without regard to the resulting suffering of the populace.

Just as during the Algerian insurgency of the late 1950s, the Taliban in Afghanistan asserted their control and legitimacy by claiming to conduct trials and other governmental functions in parts of Afghanistan. Some officials of the central government only resided in their assigned areas during daylight hours, withdrawing to safety at nightfall. Ruthless Taliban conduct built on residual popular support to enable a significant rebel presence in the southern and eastern provinces of the country.

This presence was especially effective in Helmand, a long, north–south province, shaped like a finger in southwestern Afghanistan. Intent on fighting terrorists, for several years the United States left this area largely to its NATO allies.[50] The UK assumed responsibility for the disputed province, in part urged on by Canada, which took over neighboring Kandahar. The multinational headquarters responsible for the region was based on a Canadian brigade staff, which complicated command relationships with the series of British brigades—and brigadier commanders—that provided troops in the province. Because of competing demands for troops in Iraq (see chapter 8), the initial British contingent in Helmand was slow to deploy, and almost two-thirds of forces sent were involved in logistical support rather than combat. Each replacement cycle of UK forces grew in combat power, peaking at 7,600 in 2007. Yet, even with additional Canadian participation the coalition lacked a sufficient number of soldiers to provide the requisite combination of security and mobile reserves in Helmand. Moreover, the British unwittingly became involved in a dispute between two local tribes. Initial Taliban attacks were poorly coordinated but still inflicted sufficient casualties to render the conflict unpopular in the UK. Improvised explosive device attacks grew steadily from 2006 to 2010. Urged

on by the provincial governor, in 2006 the British expanded their efforts into the northern half of the province, distributing individual platoons into villages where they frequently fought pitched battles with their opponents. One such "platoon house" called in air strikes on twenty-six separate occasions during a ten-day period. All of this dispersed combat contributed to a sustained level of violence that killed 106 UK troops in four years.[51]

The British task in Helmand was exacerbated as a result of a poorly executed American poppy eradication campaign (Operation River Dance) in 2006. Seeking to apply its counternarcotics experience from Latin America, Washington wanted to eliminate this source of corruption, but not all of its NATO allies agreed. Given the difficulty and expense of transportation in Afghanistan, alternative crops such as cotton, which were far less valuable per unit of weight than were poppies, proved no substitute for farmers. The attempt to eliminate the primary cash crop in the province therefore motivated many residents to support the Taliban, especially because local officials lied about the progress of the campaign as police accepted bribes not to enforce it.[52]

The UN-authorized International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) provided security initially for Kabul and later for the entire country. With contributions from forty-two countries, in 2011 ISAF peaked at 130,000 troops from fifty-one countries including all thirty members of NATO, which had assumed leadership of ISAF from 2003.[53] Smaller states often contributed more than their share of troops, but just as in Somalia not all participating governments were prepared for genuine combat operations rather than peacekeeping. Some participants were restricted by "national caveats" that severely limited what they could do and that encouraged informal truces with local opposition groups. Much of the actual counterinsurgency effort therefore fell on a limited number of national armed forces, notably (in addition to the United States) those of the Commonwealth and France. Even for these soldiers, casualties made continued operations politically difficult; in 2012, for example, France—which at one time provided up to 3,500 troops for ISAF—withdrew all but its logistical and mentoring elements after suffering eighty-five killed.[54]

The only feasible course for the coalition to create a stable Afghanistan involved "nation building," which Republican Party leaders in the United States in particular had condemned during the previous decade. Just as in Haiti, building responsible and public-minded security forces was next to impossible in a society where the concept of selfless service to the central state was rare if not unknown. Instead, as William Rosenau wrote to explain the failure of Afghan police forces, "nearly every institution associated with the Afghan state, including the Afghan National Army (ANA), was riddled with what in Western terms is considered corruption."[55] In an echo of the Soviet struggle two decades

earlier, Afghan officials in uniform and out would accept funds and equipment from the occupiers, then promptly spend and sell everything they were not using at the moment, after which they asked for more of the same. This attitude made it easy for their opponents to acquire weapons and uniforms so that they could infiltrate and attack government or ISAF forces. Superiors in the army and police robbed their subordinates of pay and equipment, forcing those subordinates to prey on the populace simply to live, which thereby motivated some to turn to the Taliban. Even when individual units developed elements of discipline and professionalism, the constant struggle with their insurgent opponents often undermined the organizational progress. For all these reasons, in mid-2008 none of the Afghan National Police units was rated fully capable.[56]

In the absence of effective police organizations, local coalition leaders sometimes made deals with village elders or militiamen, providing gasoline, weapons, supplies, and small stipends in return for maintaining order. On occasion, this type of support inspired the local militia to significant security efforts. Unfortunately, even after such "Afghan Local Police" (ALP) became a formal national program, its arrangements were subject to misunderstanding and friction, especially when one coalition unit relieved another in place and had to learn to deal with the ALP in that area.[57]

Assessment

In its well-intentioned desire to eliminate a haven of Islamist terrorism, the Bush administration had almost casually overthrown the Taliban government without any clear plan for what would succeed it. In the process, it incurred obligations to warlords and other groups that would later hamper establishment of an effective government in Afghanistan. The United States would soon repeat these errors in Iraq.

Meanwhile, however, hundreds of thousands of coalition/ISAF soldiers as well as local officials, soldiers, and police risked their lives in a sustained effort to create a stable Afghanistan. Yet, there were never sufficient troops to establish the security necessary for the new state. The occupiers soon found themselves deploying even larger forces to Iraq, while the Afghans—like their Iraqi counterparts—struggled to create effective security forces in a confused and confusing web of conflicting interest groups. Meanwhile, the Taliban forces received sanctuary and aid in Pakistan while retaining the ability to cross the Afghan border almost at will.

The same factors that had made possible the Taliban collapse in 2001—multiple ethnic, linguistic, and cultural divisions within the country; chronic poverty that made gaining wealth more important than building the political future; and massive firepower that often caused "collateral damage"—now

made it nearly impossible for the interim government, ISAF, and the coalition to create a new, more democratic regime with widespread support.

After having fought a protracted conflict in Vietnam for more than a decade, the American armed forces found themselves in a similar situation three decades later. The dual problems of securing the border against infiltrators and creating effective Afghan security forces challenged ISAF/coalition capacity to create a secure environment within the country. The best solution for this problem was population-centric counterinsurgency, but that approach required force levels, consistency of purpose, and patience that America, or indeed most countries, lacked.[58]

CHAPTER 8

Diversion to Iraq, 2001–2005

Fresh from its rapid (if incomplete) victory in Afghanistan, the George W. Bush administration turned to what it regarded as unfinished business—regime change in Iraq. While a majority of Iraqis might loath Saddam's repressive government, that did not mean that they would applaud a prolonged foreign occupation, however well-meaning, nor agree on a Western-style democratic government to replace the Ba'ath tyranny. By trying to control the Shi'a and other confessional groups, Saddam's government had increased religious cohesion and consciousness in political actors, creating similar preconditions to the sense of *group* rather than individual identity that had destroyed Yugoslavia. Moreover, the 1991 and 2003 conflicts, in conjunction with the prolonged economic sanctions over the years between those two events, left Iraq with an infrastructure that was as tattered as its social structure, united only in its suspicion of government authority and with no recent experience in democracy. As Peter Mansoor wryly observed, "Iraq was a failed society long before the collapse of the Ba'athist state in 2003."[1]

Misperceptions of Mass Destruction

The pretext for invading Iraq was the dubious premise that Iraq continued to possess and produce weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Political leaders of the Bush administration were convinced that this was the case. Intelligence analysts conceded that some chemical weapons probably remained hidden, but such analysts were divided concerning the status of Iraq's nuclear and biological weapons programs. Some observers believed that all these programs remained active, while others suspected that the Iraqi government was waiting for an end to sanctions before resuming development.[2] In retrospect, the latter hypothesis was almost certainly correct. The UN Special Commission (see

chapter 6) found no evidence of production, as opposed to research, of WMD after 1991,[3] and the IAEA certified that Iraq had no ongoing nuclear weapons program. Postconflict investigations strongly suggested that Saddam had done away with his existing WMD and production capability to satisfy inspectors while keeping his weapons development programs ready to restart as soon as the UN Security Council lifted sanctions.[4]

Yet political leaders from Vice President Richard Cheney on down were convinced that Iraqi WMD were more prevalent than was the case, and they kept pressuring intelligence agencies to agree with them. The US intelligence agencies received a series of allegations concerning contacts between the Iraqi government, al-Qaeda, and other enemies of America or claims to have witnessed WMD inside Iraq. Most experienced Middle East analysts were skeptical of such claims, which appeared to be generated for the personal gain of the so-called witnesses, but not everyone read these reports with critical eyes. Allegations of cooperation between Saddam, al-Qaeda, and Iran seemed especially dubious—while all three might welcome blows against the United States, it did not follow that they would overcome their mutual suspicions and differences to actively conspire together, especially about the WMD that Saddam had once used against Iranians.

When the intelligence agencies did not provide the expected confirmation of administration beliefs, some political appointees concluded that those agencies—rather than the politicians themselves—were politicizing the process, so they decided to bypass those agencies and write their own WMD reports. In the Pentagon immediately after 9/11, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz created an Office of Special Plans that combined existing but dubious intelligence reports with the claims of Iraqi exiles such as Ahmed Chalabi; many of these exiles' assertions were later discredited.[5] This willing acceptance of questionable assertions was an inherent conflict of interest, in which policy organizations were creating "intelligence" to justify their desired policy outcomes.

Career intelligence analysts had rejected the reports by exiles and others because those reports were inconsistent with what they knew about the situation, but this body of knowledge was largely unfamiliar to policy makers. Apparently unaware of these bogus "intelligence" efforts by the decision-makers, a subsequent commission criticized the intelligence agencies, rather than policy makers, for demanding proof that Iraq did *not* have weapons of mass destruction, which was the question posed by the administration to the Intelligence Community.[6]

Using this distorted belief system, the Bush administration persuaded the UN Security Council to pass Resolution 1441 declaring Iraq to be in breach of

its obligations and offering it a "final opportunity to comply."[7] This resolution put the onus on Iraq, rather than the inspectors, to prove that it had complied with these obligations. Now Iraq was in the same position as the American intelligence agencies, trying to disprove an assumption that was wrongly presented as fact.[8] Meanwhile, dozens of intelligence reports from different sources indicated that Iraq was concealing *something* from the inspectors. It was rarely apparent *what* was being concealed, but many assumed that there were additional, unreported, components of chemical weapons. At the very least, there was no means to completely disprove that assumption. The search for nonexistent WMD provided a self-licking ice cream cone to justify invasion.

Planning the Invasion

During 2002 and early 2003, American forces built up in the Gulf region, ostensibly to pressure Iraq to comply with the UN but also to prepare for a possible second conflict. Given its previous experience, Riyadh refused to host another Western buildup, although refueling and other aircraft did operate from Saudi bases. Instead, Kuwait and some of the Gulf States either agreed with Washington or felt compelled to support the country that guaranteed their security. This meant that the available real estate on which the "Crusaders" could assemble was sharply limited in comparison to Desert Shield, which in turn made naval air support and other basing even more significant; the nightmare scenario was that Iraq would use its (alleged) WMD against the assembled forces in Kuwait.

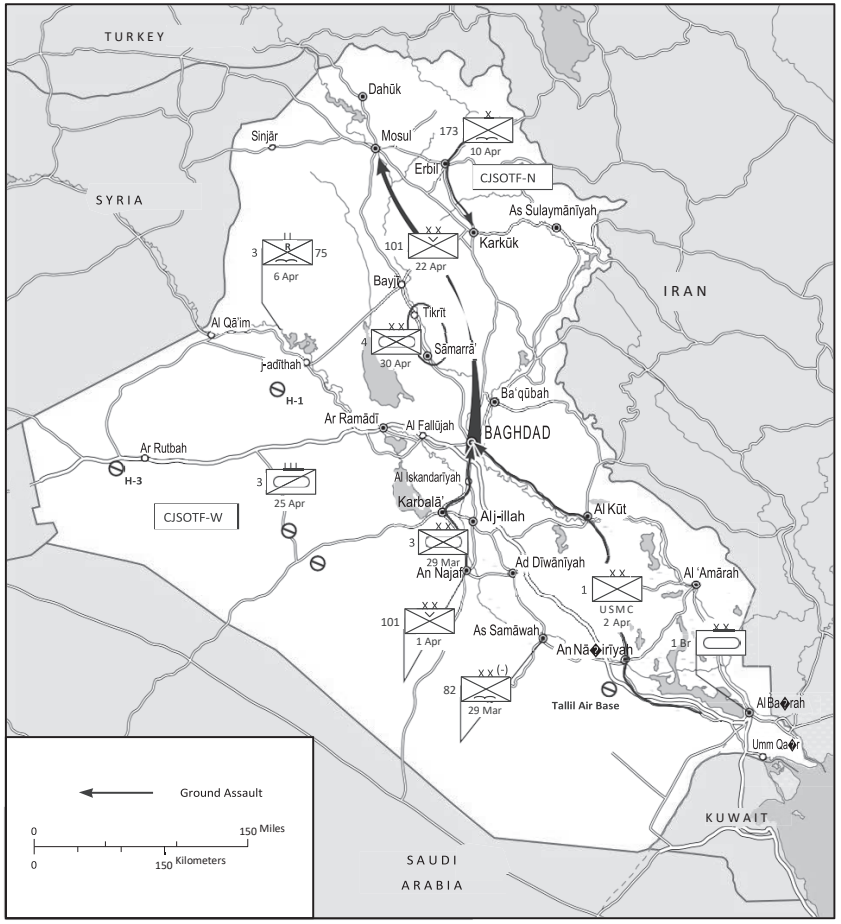
Both the Western powers and Iraq had significantly smaller forces available than in the previous conflict, quite apart from the ongoing commitment to Afghanistan. The original concept for operations envisioned deploying up to 385,000 troops to the region, but this planned level of soldiers quickly dwindled during 2002.[9] The head of Central Command, General Franks, professed to agree with Secretary Rumsfeld that a Desert Storm–style operation under CENTCOM Plan 1003 would be too time-consuming to assemble and too predictable to achieve surprise,[10] so the same kind of whittling and cutting of deployment lists that had complicated the Afghan operation was applied to force streams destined for the Gulf. Instead of allowing an integrated TPFDL to unreel as designed for maximum efficient use of the available transport, Rumsfeld required justification before approving each force package built around a division or separate brigade. Nor was the massive coalition troop assembly of 1991 replicated twelve years later. Although a number of states, especially from the Commonwealth, provided special operations troops, the largest conventional component of non-American troops was the British 1st Armoured Division headquarters, composed of three dissimilar

brigades that had only three battalion-sized battle groups on hand when the operation began.[11]

The Office of the Secretary of Defense assumed that Iraqi "liberation" would follow the same pattern as that of Afghanistan, with the bulk of the Iraqi army refusing to fight while special operations forces and precision-guided munitions provided force multipliers for regime change. Rumsfeld rejected estimates by the Joint Chiefs that 200,000 troops would be required, instead opining that a single army brigade and a marine regimental combat team would be sufficient.[12] Rather, a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–West (CJSOTF-W) built around 5th Special Forces Group with Commonwealth and Polish participation would operate out of Jordan; its mission was to infiltrate the unpopulated areas of western and southern Iraq, seeking to link up with Shi'a resistance groups and secure An Nasiriyah in advance of conventional operations. CJSOTF-North, using 10th Special Forces Group, had a similar mission in the Kurdish region of Iraq, relying on Peshmerga fighters. Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith attempted to recruit expatriates to serve as "Free Iraqi Forces," but only a few hundred could be located and trained to reach Iraq in time. Meanwhile, the SOF elements, in combination with Patriot air defense units sent to Israel and Kuwait, prepared to thwart any repetition of the 1991 Scud missile attacks.[13]

Third US Army headquarters, reinforced with US Marine and British staff as well as a number of well-respected senior American officers, controlled the conventional ground campaign as a Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC). CFLCC had multiple subordinate elements. The UK 1st Armoured Division, led by the brigade-sized 3 Royal Marine Commando, was to secure the deepwater port of Umm Qasr and the oil facilities of the Al-Faw Peninsula, thereby reducing the opportunity for environmental damage such as from the oil field fires of 1991. In the initial landings, the United States gave tactical control of SEAL Team 3 and the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit to the Royal Marines. Once the port and oil facilities were secure, 1st Armoured Division faced the even larger task of controlling the major city of Basrah, although that could wait upon American success farther north.

The I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) was to advance to Al Kut, cross the Tigris, and advance up the eastern side to Baghdad. The ground element of I MEF was 1st Marine Division, reinforced with a joint engineer group (primarily two naval construction regiments plus Army Reserve component bridging) and Task Force Tarawa (2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade, primarily Regimental Combat Team 2). This brigade had the difficult task of acting to screen the space between marines to the east and army forces to the west.[14]



Iraq, 2003. Map by the official cartographer at the US Army Center of Military History, Washington, DC. It first appeared in Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak (eds.), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War*, vol. 1 (Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2019) and is reproduced by permission of the US Army War College Press.

The deployment muddle not only delayed the arrival of some marine elements but also restricted army elements in Kuwait, directed by V Corps headquarters, to the 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized), the 11th Attack Helicopter Regiment, and two brigades of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). The 1st Armored and 1st Cavalry Divisions would not arrive until after hostilities began, and ultimately Franks and Rumsfeld decided not to deploy the 1st Cavalry at all. Only the 82nd Airborne Division and an armored cavalry regiment arrived in Kuwait early in the campaign. Most significantly, American

planners wanted to introduce the 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized) into northern Iraq, and European Command dispatched logistical elements to prepare the way in Turkey. Predictably, however, the Turkish government declined to accept such a belligerent role in the war, although it did permit overflights of naval aircraft from the Mediterranean. The Turkish decision consigned 4th Division to a protracted sea movement through the Suez Canal and into the Persian Gulf. This very public diplomatic failure at least served as an effective deception, encouraging Saddam to retain two Republican Guard divisions plus one armored, two mechanized, and six army infantry divisions in the north. In place of a full mechanized division, the invasion of northern Iraq was limited to JSOTF-N reinforced on March 26–27 by the 173rd Airborne Brigade and a single armored company team that air-landed there.[15]

All this planning for the conduct of the war hinged on how it would begin. Most observers, including Saddam, expected a repeat of Desert Storm with a prolonged aerial bombardment phase followed by a methodical ground war. However, Saddam no longer had fifty-plus divisions to impede the invasion, and in any event massive infrastructure damage by air strikes would only complicate the task of any post-Saddam regime in Baghdad. A time-limited air bombardment and SOF infiltration phrase followed by rapid ground advance offered the possibility of operational surprise and rapid maneuver. The greater risks inherent in this emphasis on speed included the difficulties of resupplying and repairing scattered units.

The 2003 attack, code-named Cobra II in reference to the 1944 breakout from Normandy, involved a significantly larger proportion of precision-guided munitions than had Desert Storm twelve years earlier. This time, most of the Tomahawk missiles were guided by GPS rather than terrain-following radar, and at least 65 percent of air-dropped weapons were PGMs, as compared to 10 percent in 1991. The prior infiltration of special operations elements permitted greater use of laser designators against targets.[16] This increase in accuracy, while by no means infallible, permitted the coalition to use far fewer sorties and tons of weapons to achieve at least the same level of effectiveness as 1991.

Using targeting data gathered during Operation Southern Watch, planners intended, once again, to strike selected Iraqi systems such as leadership, communications, Republican Guard formations, and infrastructure. The extensive experience in Desert Storm and in former Yugoslavia also facilitated planning, although political leaders in particular appeared to overemphasize the fragility of the Ba'athist regime. From September 2002 onward, the predictable if vain Iraqi attempts to respond to Southern Watch flights provided the pretext for heavier attacks on communications and air defense controls under Operation Southern Focus. Periodic surges in air activity helped desensitize Iraqi response

to the buildup in the region.[17] According to recent declassified scholarship by air force historian Benjamin Lambeth, Southern Focus constituted the first phase of the much larger air campaign and serviced targets the US Army believed necessary to neutralize before launching the invasion, the so-called generated start. As a result, many of the goals of the original campaign plan concerning alleged WMD, enemy air defenses, and other strictly military targets had already been accomplished before the first American soldiers entered Iraq.[18]

In addition to the time constraints, there were two other significant limitations on aerial bombardment. First, just as in former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and other post–Cold War theaters, the US government was concerned about even the appearance of excessive force and civilian casualties. Air planners labored to reduce the probability of "collateral damage," so that ultimately the air attacks struck only 39 percent of nominated targets. After the fact, a Human Rights Watch investigation conceded that there were minimal effects on the civilian populace. This result, while praiseworthy in moral and propaganda terms, severely degraded the physical and especially the psychological effects of what journalistic reports had billed as "Shock and Awe." Whether that meant longer fighting and more casualties in the ensuing campaign is unknowable.[19]

One other innovation of the campaign was the practice of "embedding" journalists within troop units. First developed in Bosnia, this procedure offered commanders some hope of avoiding the dangerous release of targetable information to the enemy, but journalists naturally considered it a challenge to reporter independence and objectivity. Some refused to accept this limitation, but free movement around a high-intensity battlefield was much riskier than similar independence in a peacekeeping or counterinsurgency environment. Regrettably, one British reporter who rejected embedding was fatally wounded, as was his interpreter, outside Basrah on March 22, 2003.[20]

The Campaign Begins

Prior to the official start of hostilities, special operations and conventional ground reconnaissance troops were already moving into Iraq while psychological operations sought to undermine Iraqi morale with leaflets, broadcasts, and taped telephone messages. Then a last-minute report indicated, vaguely (and inaccurately), that Saddam and his sons would visit an underground command bunker in Dora Farms, a largely Assyrian suburb of southeastern Baghdad, on March 19, 2003. The opportunity to decapitate Iraqi leadership appeared too valuable to miss, especially given recurring reports of chemical agents and possible oil well sabotage. Early that morning, two F-117s and up to forty Tomahawk missiles struck Dora Farms, causing some civilian casualties but no military effect. Committed to war, the United States hastily began its air

attacks, followed on March 20 by the first ground operations.[21] This muddled start to Operation Iraqi Freedom (another politically motivated label that unlike normal operational names advertised rather than concealed its intent) probably confused the defenders as much as the attackers, but the Bush administration finally had the war it had sought so eagerly.

Initial attacks by 3 Royal Marine Brigade as well as Polish elements and a US Naval Special Warfare Group seized their objectives in oil and port facilities, while special operations helicopters sought to take out Iraqi border observation and radar posts. Most Iraqi units in the area were either oriented to defend against Iran or, like the 51st Mechanized Division, had only just arrived in the south. Follow-on forces, primarily British, quickly secured the oil fields and other key points in the Al-Faw Peninsula.[22] The entry of conventional forces into Iraq on the morning of March 21, forty-eight hours after the Dora Farms air strikes, clearly surprised the defenders, who were in any event much weaker than they had been twelve years earlier. Marine C-130s were able to air-land fuel on highways east of the rivers to resupply their advance.[23]

The invaders also encountered surprises, especially with regard to unconventional defenders. Having observed both his own domestic opposition and the unconventional struggles in Somalia, Lebanon, and elsewhere, Saddam Hussein had decided to use his domestic security and party elements, the so-called Fedayeen Saddam, to conduct unconventional attacks against the invaders. Ruled by fear and short on tactical expertise, these attackers nonetheless presented the coalition with an unpredictable threat.[24]

For a decade, American and most other Western forces had attempted to compensate for the smaller size of their armies by substituting greater access to shared information about both enemy and friendly dispositions and movements.[25] This required computer systems with broad communications bandwidth to handle the massive data generated by JSTARS and other collection systems; in 2003, the systems to handle this data were only just coming into use, with frequent loss of connectivity between tactical headquarters. While the massive data approach had some merit in maneuvering against conventional military forces, it was ill-suited to countering the Fedayeen, who operated without uniforms or conventional patterns of deployment. Conventional forces could be templated, so that the detection of a small unit might allow an analyst to predict how the rest of a larger force would be arrayed, but such templating did not apply to the Fedayeen. General Franks expressed frustration that such irregular forces sometimes did not appear on Blue Force Tracker and similar systems.[26] In some cases, coalition pilots and UAVs gave advance notice of Fedayeen attacks, but these weak irregular forces still complicated rear area protection and control of urban areas.

The most prominent encounters with the Fedayeen occurred in An Nasiriyah between March 23 and April 2. Press reports focused on the ambush of a convoy from the US Army's 507th Maintenance Company, which took a wrong turn into the city and lost several casualties and prisoners. Far more significant was the effort of 2nd Marine Brigade, with some British participation, to secure a number of nearby bridges over the Euphrates River. Two additional marine expeditionary units eventually cleared the town. Although the marines prevailed, their amphibious assault vehicles (AAV-7A1s) were vulnerable to RPGs and other antitank weapons, resulting in seven AAVs being knocked out along with eighteen marines killed and thirty-six wounded.[27]

Just as in the case of Task Force Hawk (1999), the mass use of attack helicopters in Iraq encountered significant problems. In planning the 2003 campaign, the V Corps staff again attempted to exploit the potential of heliborne antitank weapons. On March 25, the 11th Attack Helicopter Regiment's assigned target for a deep operation was the 2nd Medina Armored Division, located around Karbala, where the Euphrates River and Lake Milh (also known as Razaza) formed a choke point (the Karbala Gap), less than twenty-five miles (40 km) wide, on the advance toward Baghdad. En route to this target, delays due to refueling and sandstorms meant that the regiment lost the advantage of suppressive fires in the target area while the enemy had warning of their movement. Moreover, because the attack did not receive clearance to cross into the 101st Airborne Division's area of operations, the helicopters had to divert over urban terrain en route to the target. Ground fire from various buildings brought down one attack helicopter and damaged others, again giving a somewhat exaggerated impression of the AH-64's vulnerability. By contrast, most of the helicopters of the 101st Airborne Division, with greater logistical support and lower exposure to urban areas, maneuvered more effectively.[28]

The bad weather that impeded the attack helicopter movement was the leading edge of a larger sandstorm that descended on eastern Iraq from March 24 through 27. This storm, in conjunction with the Fedayeen threat, prompted Gen. David McKiernan, the Third US Army/CFLCC commander, to call a temporary halt to the coalition advance, despite the disapproval of General Franks and other senior leaders who feared a loss of momentum in the attack. At the time, this pause in conjunction with the Fedayeen and AH-64 difficulties prompted journalists to arrive at the false conclusion that the campaign had stalled. Saddam also reportedly misinterpreted the pause, focusing on the threat from northern Iraq and failing to destroy a key Euphrates bridge leading into the Karbala Gap. When Iraqi units attempted to counterattack, including some suicide vehicle explosions, the enemy discovered that, although the sandstorm limited some laser-guided munitions,

JSTARS and other collection assets permitted the coalition to strike through the storm.[29]

The pause also enabled McKiernan to plan the ground advance to Baghdad International Airport, west of the city, a site that Franks initially wanted to seize with a more risky air assault; instead, a brigade of the 101st conducted a feint toward Hillah, while the 1st and 2nd Brigades of that division seized control of the roads leading northward out of Najaf, then assisted the 3rd Infantry Division in clearing the city. Newly arrived units, including a brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division (in Samawah) and the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, relieved elements of 3rd Infantry Division so that the latter could resume the advance. Between March 30 and April 1, the 3rd Brigade of that division and its 3rd Squadron, 7th Cavalry, moved into the Karbala Gap and seized a key bridge. On March 29, the division encountered the first suicide bomb at a checkpoint.[30]

Three days later (April 2), I MEF seized a bridge to cross the Tigris River and resume its northern advance; RCT 1 and RCT 7 cut off and virtually destroyed the 5th Baghdad Infantry and al-Nida Armored Divisions of the Republican Guard.[31] Thereafter, both invading forces pursued alternate routes to bypass centers of resistance. In the course of the next week, the twin advances of V Corps and I MEF, compounded by the combined SOF-Kurdish expansion in the north, presented Saddam's regime with multiple and conflicting threats. On April 1, for example, a company of 3rd Battalion, 75th Rangers, seized the Haditha Dam in northern Iraq to preempt any attempt to flood the Euphrates River downstream.

II Republican Guard Corps attempted to counterattack the V Corps advance on April 3, but coalition airpower defeated this rapidly. On the night of April 3–4, 3rd Infantry Division seized the international airport from elements of the Special Republican Guard and subsequently cleared the area while fighting off counterattacks. On April 7, the marines crossed the Diyala River and began to consolidate control of portions of Baghdad. This crossing, like multiple previous bridging efforts, was accomplished by 8th Engineer Support Battalion, an ad hoc collection including both marine bridging units and the Army Reserve's 459th Multi-Role Bridge Company.[32]

Three marine light armored battalions with LAVs led Task Force Tripoli to capture Saddam's hometown of Tikrit, halfway between Baghdad and Mosul, while Kurds with SOF and B-52 support moved southward toward Baghdad.[33]

Although most of the Republican Guard and parts of the Iraqi army had fought well, Saddam's forces began to dissolve quickly at this point. British, American, and other coalition troops were better equipped, better trained, and better led. Exasperated by decades of oppression, the populations in majority-Shi'a and Kurdish areas liberated themselves once the Sunni/Ba'athist regime

began to collapse.[34] Sometimes overlooked was the effect of special operations forces in reinforcing Kurdish and other Iraqi groups that resisted Ba'athist control. Coalition air superiority after ten years of periodic air attacks enhanced the psychological effects of the rapid ground advance. In a regime that punished the bearers of bad news, defeat happened almost before the leaders were aware of the threat.

As a final push against the regime, the V Corps commander, then-Lt. Gen. William S. Wallace, instructed 3rd Infantry Division to probe the center of the Iraqi capital. Although Wallace apparently intended a single large operation, in practice the division conducted two "thunder runs" though the center of Baghdad with the intent of showing the Ba'athist regime that it was in a helpless situation. On April 5, Task Force 1-64 (1st Battalion, 64th Armor) swung through the city until it reached the airport. TF 1-64 suffered significant equipment and personnel losses but clearly dominated its opponents and completed its raid. Two days later, the entire 2nd Brigade followed a similar route but then turned eastward and occupied much of the governmental area (later enclosed in the Green Zone), fighting a pitched battle for control. Among the opponents of this advance were a reported 128 foreign jihadists who had recently arrived from Syria—another ominous foreshadowing of future events. Despite Iraqi efforts to block the advance and an Iraqi missile strike that killed two soldiers and two journalists at the brigade headquarters, this operation was again successful, effectively ending any vestige of Iraqi governmental control. After a final public appearance on April 9, Saddam like his two sons went into hiding, leaving his supporters to fight on for a few additional days.[35]

After decades of repressive government, Iraq dissolved into disorder and looting. Armed Iraqi militias such as the Kurdish Peshmerga began to assert political control of their own areas rather than cooperating with invading special operations forces. In contrast to Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom deployed such a small invading force that the coalition was incapable of maintaining public order, let alone putting a company in every village and neighborhood to deter insurgency. Still worse for the Iraqi populace was the sad state of infrastructure and the economy, neither of which had ever recovered from the Iran-Iraq War and the 1991 conflict, let alone the more limited destruction of 2003. Just as in Afghanistan, the prolonged stress on society and economy caused many locals first to expect unrealistic American aid and then to turn to radicals who blamed their opponents while promising instant improvement.

Now What?

Prior to the conflict, American staffs understandably focused on deploying, supplying, and maneuvering military forces; although they included plans for

contingencies such as mass civilian chemical casualties, preparations for actual occupation and governance of a defeated Iraq were severely limited. Many in the Bush administration gave excessive credence to Ahmed Chalabi and other expatriates, assuming that somehow the Iraqis, who had no experience with democracy, would create their own representative government with little outside assistance by Americans.

In the interim, some form of provisional government was necessary to care for and govern Iraq in the immediate aftermath of Saddam's overthrow. The first choice to head this Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) was an excellent one, retired Lt. Gen. Jay M. Garner. Garner had gained widespread Iraqi support, especially among the Kurds, for his leadership during Operation Provide Comfort after the previous war. Secretary Rumsfeld and Undersecretary Feith pressured the general into abandoning his work for a defense contractor to put together the ORHA leadership.[36] Garner quickly assembled a team of experts from various government agencies, but he had difficulty obtaining a budget, transportation, communications, security, and other basic tools to start work. Once the team reached Baghdad, military authorities repeatedly shifted its assigned offices, disrupting efforts to reestablish order. The unspoken belief of many administration officials appeared to be that oil-rich Iraq would pay for its own reconstruction without major American aid.

Moreover, Secretary Rumsfeld wanted complete control over ORHA and was particularly concerned to avoid what he considered the errors of nation building under the Clinton administration. He told Garner to replace several ORHA members whose primary employment was in the State Department and other non-DOD agencies. In a March 22 teleconference, the secretary reportedly accused Garner of disloyalty for resisting these changes. Garner soon found himself forbidden to speak to the press; even after Rumsfeld told Garner he would be replaced, the secretary insisted that the retired general remain in Baghdad to facilitate a handover. Moreover, Garner had agreed with the Kurdish leaders that an inclusive advisory council was the first step toward a national government, at a time when Vice President Cheney still considered Chalabi the natural leader of the new regime.[37]

Rumsfeld's choice to succeed Garner, a choice blessed by President Bush, was Ambassador L. Paul Bremer III, a retired career foreign service officer with extensive experience. In accordance with normal doctrine, Bremer believed that he was the president's personal representative, but his high-handed actions upon reaching Baghdad so offended Garner that the latter left Iraq within two weeks after Bremer's arrival in mid-May 2003. The coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) that succeeded ORHA was equally short of personnel and resources and hard-pressed to deal with multiple problems on the ground.[38] US

military commanders in particular objected to the CPA's insistence on central control of scarce funds, much of them captured from the previous regime, to rebuild the neglected infrastructure.[39]

More significantly, Bremer believed that the Defense Department and White House wished him to implement policies that soon proved disastrous to the restoration of order. On May 16, the ambassador issued CPA Order No. 1, which directed the elimination of all Ba'ath Party members from the four top levels of the government bureaucracy. One week later, CPA Order No. 2 dissolved all defense and intelligence organizations in the country and forbade any government reemployment of former personnel of these organizations. Bremer later modified CPA No. 1 to leave personnel screening up to the new, largely Shi'a Iraqi government, thereby increasing the opportunities for discrimination against Sunnis and even nominal Ba'athists.[40]

In principle, the elimination of the Ba'ath Party, as well as defense and intelligence elements within the Baghdad government, made moral sense, but in practice these actions were disastrous. However much politicians in Washington loathed the fallen regime, the Sunni minority that had staffed Saddam's government and military had unmatched experience and contacts to restore services and operate a new government. US military leaders had already been negotiating with ex-officers of the Iraqi military to hire them for the difficult tasks involved in rebuilding the country. Now, the two CPA orders deprived those officers as well as Ba'athist civilian officials of any hope of future employment under a majority-Shi'a government. This exclusion drove them into rebellion and specifically into cooperation with local Sunni advocates of al-Qaeda. Moreover, the CPA initially was uninterested in working with tribal and other traditional leaders in Iraq, cutting off another axis of coordination with the population.[41]

The January 30, 2005, election in Iraq further compounded the problem. In the interests of speed, the electorate was not divided into specific electoral districts; instead total votes were allocated among fixed lists of candidates. Iraqis suspicious of the entire process did not participate. Only 58 percent of eligible Iraqis voted, with the majority of Sunnis boycotting the vote due to a combination of intimidation and suspicion. As a consequence, Sunni candidates (who represented some 32–37 percent of the population) won only 16 seats (6 percent) out of 275 in the transitional assembly. Many Sunnis believed the new government was incapable of reconciliation, a natural consequence of their failure to vote. Perversely, therefore, this lack of Sunni representation only encouraged armed opposition to the new government, while Shi'a politicians became accustomed to an excessive, unrepresentative amount of electoral power, which they subsequently tried to maintain by repressive means.[42]

In the immediate aftermath of the 2003 conflict, much governmental and international attention focused on the inability to locate the weapons of mass destruction that had been the principal justification for the war. Given the scanty forces permitted into Kuwait prior to the invasion, the only element immediately available to oversee the search was the headquarters of 75th Field Artillery Brigade; it formed ad hoc exploitation teams to accompany major maneuver units but found little evidence of WMD.[43] The Defense Intelligence Agency organized a more thorough search once Saddam's government had collapsed; although Iraqi researchers had been told to retain some elements such as biological cultures in their home refrigerators, no significant cache of WMD emerged.

Boots on the Ground

Just as in Afghanistan, a campaign using minimal foreign military forces soon found itself shorthanded when it came to restoring order and building a new regime. Quite naturally, soldiers and marines who had spent months preparing for and conducting Operation Iraqi Freedom wanted to return home as soon as possible; troop strength declined from 300,000 to 113,000 by September.[44] The British government also expected to withdraw its troops rapidly. Even for the soldiers that remained, commanders not only sought to protect them from further casualties but believed that the continued presence of foreign soldiers as occupiers would act as antigens, provoking local antibodies (resistance) and discrediting the new regime arising in Baghdad.

Moreover, the small forward operating bases (FOBs)within Baghdad not only caused friction with the population but also absorbed significant numbers of soldiers simply to guard those bases, prompting commanders in 2004 to evacuate the FOBs to larger bases in the suburbs.[45] The American preference for minimizing military presence in urban areas thus left the cities relatively vulnerable to control by radicals.

In the short term, coalition troops were essential to preserve order, but the US Army and Marine Corps had shrunk so much since the Cold War that they were hardly capable of sustaining prolonged deployments while simultaneously maintaining readiness for other contingencies. The USMC, for example, sought to limit deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq to six to seven months each so as to maintain a high degree of training for combat; US Army Special Forces had a similar guideline.[46] Based on experience in previous conflicts, the army aimed to maintain unit integrity, rotating entire divisions and brigades of conventional troops after twelve months on station, although in practice shortages of troops caused this time frame to stretch up to seventeen months.

Moreover, the initial participants in the Iraqi conflict, such as 3rd Infantry Division, were ordered home while leaving much of their equipment behind in Iraq. This equipment became worn out through incessant use in a harsh environment, while the troops at home had insufficient vehicles and weaponry to train for subsequent deployments.

The combined obligations to provide troops on rotation in Iraq (fifteen brigades), Afghanistan (two), former Yugoslavia (one), and even the Sinai Desert (one) exceeded American capacity. This dilemma placed great strains on America's allies and its own reserve components, not to mention driving a restructuring of the few active-duty units available. Reserve component units had always been underequipped as well as undermanned, but now they, like their active-duty equivalents, sometimes had insufficient vehicles for training at home, while some reservists left their parent units to fill vacancies in other, deploying elements. Unlike the active army, there was no organized process for replacing casualties in reserve component units.[47] The recurring deployment of such units overseas also reduced the ability of the National Guard to perform domestic missions such as disaster relief; by 2012, defense authorization legislation permitted the Army Reserve to perform such missions. This reversed a longstanding interpretation of an existing 1878 law that had effectively forbidden using federal soldiers, including reservists—as opposed to Guardsmen—in domestic roles.[48]

Beginning in 2003 and following the precedent of the Stryker brigade design, the US Army started to reorganize all its combat brigades into what were termed units of action (UAs) or brigade combat teams (BCTs). For heavy (armored or mechanized) brigades, the new structure was based on combined arms battalions, each with a mixture of two armored and two mechanized infantry companies, plus many of the same elements found in a Stryker brigade, such as a direct support artillery battalion of eighteen to twenty-four tubes, a logistical support battalion, signals and intelligence companies, plus a small cavalry squadron.[49] The combined arms battalions gained the advantage of regular cooperation between the different weapons systems, but this came at the cost of complicating training, maintenance, and resupply—for example, the new units needed to carry larger varieties of repair parts. Moreover, dividing divisional assets often severely reduced capabilities; to cite but one example, the demise of combat electronic warfare and intelligence battalions meant the loss of signals intelligence direction finding, which depended on the cooperation of intercept units spread across a divisional front.

One principal purpose of this reorganization was to generate additional brigade-sized units for rotation to Iraq and Afghanistan, redividing the

standard three-brigade structure of a division into four smaller UAs. The difficulty was that, as part of the 1990s restructuring, most divisions had already reduced the numbers of both maneuver battalions in each division and of line companies in each battalion. As initially formed, therefore, most UAs had two rather than three combined arms battalions, which meant that a typical brigade lacked sufficient maneuver units to control its assigned operating area or maintain an adequate reserve force. This was particularly important in the developing counterinsurgency environment. Infantry BCTs rotating into Iraq in 2005 were authorized 3,496 soldiers, 825 (19 percent) fewer than the "legacy" brigades they replaced.[50] Light reconnaissance, artillery, military police, and air defense units therefore found themselves pressed into service as ad hoc infantry or convoy security. Moreover, reorganizations and improvisations to manage shortages of specialized personnel and equipment preceded almost every new deployment of the same brigade. (In 2013, after its withdrawal from Iraq, the army belatedly decided to inactivate twelve of its forty-five shrunken combat brigades, thereby providing a third combined arms battalion and a small engineer battalion for the remaining heavy brigades.[51])

As noted in the previous chapter, the post–Cold War American military was shorthanded in terms of headquarters as well as maneuver brigades. In place of the reinforced Third Army/CFLCC staff, the much smaller V Corps headquarters became the post-Saddam control element as Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF)–7, commanded in 2003–4 by the newly promoted Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez. Despite his extensive knowledge and skills, Sanchez was so junior that he experienced considerable friction when dealing with Ambassador Bremer and other military leaders.[52] Rather than inheriting an experienced staff, Sanchez had to preside over the slow expansion, by more than 400 percent, of the corps headquarters by individual staff officers from all over the army, all while complex and urgent problems ballooned on the ground. Developing intelligence skills to analyze the multitude of insurgents was particularly difficult.

A year after Saddam's fall, CJTF-7 was replaced by another ad hoc headquarters, Multi-National Forces–Iraq (MNF-I) plus a multinational corps headquarters that was expected to guide a network of subordinate multinational divisions in the infinitely difficult task of restoring government, services, and order in a war-torn society. Some of these corps and the eight division headquarters developed around existing American and British staffs, while others, such as Multi-National Division–Central-South (MND-CS), were a hodgepodge of up to eighteen different nationalities seeking to secure the Najaf area. As the contributor of the largest troop contingent (a brigade), Poland provided

the command of MND-CS for three years. Just as in Somalia and Afghanistan, however, the leaders of various national contingents were responsible to their own governments for casualties and major changes in direction.

As in previous international efforts, some of the European contributors to MNF-I were unprepared for the high level of physical threat in Iraq; some tended to withdraw to their bases rather than risk casualties. Having faithfully enforced UN sanctions against Iraq for a decade, the Spanish government withdrew its troops after ten terrorist bombs exploded in Madrid on March 11, 2004. Heavy political criticism in Rome of Italian casualties led in March 2005 to the withdrawal of the Italian contingent from Iraq; Honduras and the Dominican Republic followed suit—in total creating a brigade-sized hole in the multinational force structure. By contrast, the Republic of Korea refused to be intimidated when Zarqawi's henchmen kidnapped—and eventually beheaded—a South Korean contractor.[53]

In addition to this disjointed and ad hoc structure, MNF-I had various specialized headquarters subordinate to it. The most significant such element was Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq (MNSTC-I). The resulting acronym was often pronounced "Min-Sticky," an ironic acknowledgment that this element, which was supposed to train competent Iraqi security forces to replace the coalition, was itself a sticky, difficult proposition.

Just as in Afghanistan, creating local security units meant overcoming both the internal divisions of the country and the lingering habits of placing loyalty to ethnic groups and leaders ahead of professional service to the state. Many newly formed Iraqi units were recruited from specific towns or areas, virtually ensuring that the unit contained only a single ethnic or confessional group and thereby owed its primary allegiance to an extremist group or leader. Such confessional entities sometimes acted as death squads attacking their perceived opponents or provided concealment for private hit squads. Geographically recruited units also resisted redeployment away from their home areas, in part because there were no effective banking procedures to transmit pay home to their families. Rare indeed were units such as the 36th Commando Battalion, a battalion that CJSOTF had deliberately recruited to provide proportional representation for different constituencies, and that performed well in clearing radicals from the city of Fallujah in November 2004.[54]

Some Iraqi security forces became corrupted and partisan. In particular, the Facilities Protection Services (FPS) had originated, as the name implied, as security guards for government buildings. However, when Ambassador Bremer transferred control of these security guards to various Iraqi agencies, some of those agencies filled the FPS with militia members who then acted as death squads.[55]

"Dead Enders"? The Rise of the Iraqi Insurgency

All these shortages—of command unity, infrastructure, security forces, reconstruction funds, coalition forces, employment for ex-Ba'athist officials, and so on—contributed to the growth of what was both a civil war and an insurgency against the US-led coalition.

Once again, the Kurdish politicians and leaders sought to assert their autonomy within northern Iraq. Moreover, quite apart from a desire for revenge, many Shi'a leaders and organizations viewed the advent of a new regime aimed at democratic rule as an opportunity for them to seize permanent control over Iraq; rule by the (Shi'a) majority seemed to be a much easier goal to understand and achieve than minority rights and protection for other groups. Religiously motivated Shi'a militias proliferated, with the strongest being Jaysh al-Mahdi or JAM, which followed Muqtada al-Sadr, the radical scion of an influential Shi'a religious family. One center of JAM's widespread influence was "Sadr City," a Shi'a suburb of northeastern Baghdad previously known as Saddam City. Nuri al-Maliki, Iraqi prime minister in 2006–12, was politically dependent on Sadrist support in the elected legislature. On multiple occasions when coalition troops clashed with JAM, al-Maliki demanded that the coalition cease attacks and remove roadblocks around Sadr City.[56]

In April 2004, however, al-Sadr miscalculated by instructing JAM elements to rise up in an effort to control the Shi'a holy cities of Karbala and Najaf. To retake these cities, the coalition deployed not only the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment but eventually most of 1st Armored Division, which was in the process of withdrawing from Baghdad for redeployment. Unprepared for such intense combat, three Iraqi Civil Defense Corps battalions dissolved, and interpreters for American units refused to relocate. Under operational control of the Polish-commanded regional division (MND-CS), 1st Armored Division's 1st Brigade promptly overran Sadrist positions and captured 3,300 pounds of ammunition and explosives in Karbala in early May. JAM militiamen habitually based themselves close to historic religious sites, knowing that American ROE restricted the use of weapons in those areas. This time, however, the American brigade commander took calculated risks. A Hellfire missile destroyed a militia mortar team located between two mosques, and later the brigade directed an AC-130 in firing fifty-one rounds of 105 mm artillery to shatter a JAM headquarters across the street from the Husayn Shrine, breaking the local resistance. Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani intervened to demand a ceasefire, which allowed al-Sadr's organization to survive damaged but intact.[57]

An equal if not greater threat to future stability came from the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, its military Quds Force, and especially their

charismatic head, Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani. Iranian leaders saw Saddam's overthrow as both an opportunity to expand Iranian influence over the Shi'a in Iraq and a threat that Iraqi clerics in a democratic regime might jeopardize Tehran's credibility. Soleimani disagreed with al-Sadr about tactics, but was willing to work with him and even with Sunni insurgents against the United States. Using the Iranian-backed Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and especially its military wing, the Badr Corps, Soleimani provided support for various Shi'a movements fighting US forces inside Iraq. This included smuggling explosives, Hezbollah terror experts, and Gulf States would-be suicide bombers into Iraq.[58]

The Sunni opposition was even more disjointed, but the jihadist who called himself Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was the most prominent leader within the sect. Born in Jordan, Zarqawi had become a trainer of radicals in Afghanistan before moving to Iraq, where he claimed bin Laden's backing of his Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Zarqawi deliberately sought to maximize casualties and fear among the Shi'a in Iraq, hoping to stoke anger between the groups by spectacular attacks such as the February 22, 2006, explosion that destroyed the dome of the Askari Mosque in Samarra, an historic Shi'a landmark.[59] Four months later, careful intelligence analysis enabled the USAF to fatally bomb Zarqawi, but AQI continued to intimidate members of both confessional groups by murderous explosions.

For its own reasons (see chapter 11), Syria was as alarmed by the American presence as was Iran. Damascus not only feared democratic reform in the Middle East but was convinced that the United States intended to subdue the entire region to support Israel. Between 2003 and 2006, the Assad regime focused on Lebanon, where it gradually lost influence and from which it eventually (April 2005) had to withdraw all its troops, but even during this stressful period the Syrians provided aid and smuggled extremists to the opposition in Iraq.[60]

While Shi'a groups operated under cover of government authority to terrorize the population, AQI and other Sunni groups often ambushed coalition and Iraqi government troops while also harassing the populace. American soldiers sometimes reacted to bombings and other attacks by searching nearby buildings, shooting or apprehending suspected insurgents in a manner that further alienated the populace against both the coalition and the new Iraqi state. Similarly, American and Iraqi government raids, like those by Israel, were tactics that protected the troops against insurgents but often resulted in death, injury, property damage, and humiliation for the innocent.

Just as General Westmoreland had reassured the American public about the future stability of Vietnam, well-intentioned leaders of the Bush administration tried to minimize negative public perceptions of the internecine struggles in post-Saddam Iraq. Senior officials such as Secretary Rumsfeld downplayed

the seriousness of these multifaceted threats to public order, attributing them entirely to efforts by former Ba'athists.

The divided American command structure further complicated efforts to maintain order. Ambassador Bremer wanted direct control over training of Iraqi security forces, even though the expertise and equipment for such training lay within the armed forces. Ambushes and other attacks escalated rapidly, from eight coalition deaths in May 2003 to twenty-eight in July. CPA Order No. 3 therefore forbade all Iraqis, except police, from carrying weapons. Just as in Somalia, such a prohibition was unenforceable in a country awash with abandoned munitions and armed sectarian militias. Meanwhile, the borders of Iraq were too long and porous despite coalition efforts to interdict smuggling, especially by the Iranians and al-Qaeda sympathizers.[61]

The coalition did have some successes, such as the tracking and killing of Zarqawi and the determined efforts to clear Ba'athists from the "Sunni triangle" north and west of the capital. On July 22, 2003, American troops trapped Saddam's sons, Uday and Qusay, in Mosul; the two died in the ensuing firefight. Five months later, American troops found their father hiding in a spider hole. Turned over to the Iraqi government for trial, Saddam Hussein was executed on December 30, 2006. The dictator's apprehension demoralized part of the Sunni resistance, producing a temporary reduction in bomb attacks, but Zarqawi's agents actually increased their efforts, including four bombings in Karbala on December 27 alone.[62]

Against this background of growing violence, the coalition continued its efforts to build a democratic government that could assume control of the country, including putting an Iraqi face on the forces of order. The CPA created Governance Support Teams to assist in forming regional and local governments. Yet, the US government was hard-pressed to assemble sufficient civilian personnel, some of whom only deployed for a ninety-day period. The multinational division headquarters had to house, protect, and assist these teams.[63]

Assessment

By 2004, the George W. Bush administration was like a dog that had chased and then unexpectedly caught not one but two cars yet knew not what to do with them—not to mention handling various motorcycles such as the extremists in the southern Philippine Islands. Expelling would-be terrorists from their sanctuary in Afghanistan made some sense, although the country was both remote and surrounded by potential supporters for terrorism. Iraq, by contrast, actually *attracted* jihadists to the fight from throughout the Middle East and parts of Europe. Both areas—one could not really call them nations in the Western sense—were profoundly disunified, more likely to yield to a

ruthless dictator or religious extremists than to become Western-style, pluralistic democracies.

During the 1930s, Mao Zedong had theorized about the ability of protracted insurgencies to slowly wear down both the resources and the popular will of the much stronger counterinsurgent power. In the process, the unaligned populace would suffer so grievously that it eventually had to acquiesce to insurgent dominance to protect itself from further loss. The United States had already experienced this once in the Vietnam conflict, where it won most of the tactical engagements yet ultimately lost the public support of both the South Vietnamese and American peoples. During the 1970s and 1980s, the American armed forces had rebuilt themselves tactically and technically, perfecting the ability to win a decisive, offensive campaign in a very short time period, as evidenced in the Panamanian operation and the two conflicts with Saddam. This superb, professionalized military now faced its greatest trial, not in high-intensity conflict and maneuver against a mechanized enemy but in sustained efforts to develop a pluralistic democracy that could rule peacefully over a deeply fragmented society. No amount of tactical or technological advantage could ensure victory in a quest where so many variables were beyond American control.

CHAPTER 9

Regional Disruptions in Africa

In the post-Soviet era, much of Western and indeed world attention tended to focus on the conflicts that involved the United States, the sole remaining superpower. Yet, quite apart from the protracted struggles in former Yugoslavia, Somalia, and the Middle East, there were other significant conflicts, whether ongoing or new, in other areas of the globe. Mexico and Central America were plagued by narco-terrorism and criminal gangs, but much of the post-1991 violence was focused in Africa, where populations continued to grow faster than economies and many corrupt governments were intent on making themselves rich.

With an entire continent divided by arbitrary colonial boundaries while its inhabitants craved a Western standard of living, Africa was ripe for violence. Beginning in 2010, recurring droughts increased the misery of the region, producing famine and further conflict over resources. Yet the West, haunted by the peacekeeping problems in former Yugoslavia and later absorbed in the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, never provided sufficient troops to help maintain order and prevent genocide in Africa. The Organization of African Unity, which had morphed in 2002 to become the African Union (AU), attempted, largely in vain, to control multiple centers of violence.[1]

In February 2007, for example, the AU wished to support the Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu by creating an African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), but the AU had difficulty finding even 8,000 troops; UN Security Council Resolution 2067 in 2012 renewed the call for peacekeepers. Some potential donor states were reluctant to accept the risks involved, although Uganda, Kenya, and other nearby states contributed for years. Moreover, military and humanitarian intervention was often difficult on a continent

Africa. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

that lacked airfields, bridges, and other infrastructure to support a major logistical effort. Eventually, the AU shifted to the more pressing if equally challenging mission of fighting transnational Islamist radicals (e.g., al-Shabaab).[2]

The end of the Cold War largely ended the involvement of Cuban and Russian troops in Africa, but the continent remained a volatile mixture of divided populations, frustrated poor people, and excess weaponry. Both local governments and international businesses frequently turned to military force, including a revival of the mercenary companies that had figured so prominently in Africa during the 1960s and 1970s. Africa witnessed an estimated 630 state- and nonstate-based armed conflicts between 1990 and 2015; these often rekindled issues of previous civil wars or struggles over water, land, and other necessities.[3] This era popularized the idea of "blood diamonds" sold to finance conflict; in Angola alone, an estimated $1.72 billion of the gems surfaced during the 1990s.[4] In the new millennium, Beijing and Moscow began again to seek influence in Africa through investment and military aid, but neither power was particularly concerned with the well-being of the local populace. For all these reasons and others, a significant number of African states experienced internal and external military disruptions after 1990.

Some of these conflicts were closely related to those that had occurred during the Cold War, if only because of an overabundance of Soviet bloc weapons and Marxist rhetoric. A decades-long and sometimes violent border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea ended with an agreement between the two states at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in September 2018. This resolution unfortunately cleared the way for renewed hostilities between the Ethiopian government and the Marxist Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), centered on the disputed border region. The TPLF and its allies had defeated Ethiopian forces there in 1982, and they effectively dominated the Ethiopian government from 1991 until 2020, when internal conflict returned. Eritrean troops also invaded the Tigray region, engaging in widespread murder and looting, while providing aid to rebels in South Sudan (see below). Although the Tigrayans defeated and expelled the Ethiopians in June 2021, significant numbers of Eritrean forces remained in the disputed region, preventing final resolution of a prolonged attritional struggle. Meanwhile, Ethiopia blocked the movement of relief supplies into Tigray.[5] This and other conflicts continue to trouble the continent.

Sierra Leone

Apart from Somalia, the former British colony of Sierra Leone in West Africa was one of the most contested areas in the 1990s. The presence of alluvial diamonds—those scattered in river sediment rather than buried in

mines—made Sierra Leone not only wealthy as a country but a center of blood, or conflict, diamonds that funded corruption and warfare. The former colony's population was divided into some twenty tribes; while most residents in the south could speak the language of the large Mende tribe, its northern counterpart the Temne tribe was more linguistically isolated. Freeport, an independent city with both wealth from trade and Western education during the colonial period, inspired further antagonisms between urban and rural residents.[6]

On March 21, 1967, the commander of the state's small army, Brig. David Lansana, led a coup to restore the (Mende) Sierra Leone People's Party, which had lost an election. A countercoup reversed the situation, and Lansana was arrested and eventually executed.[7] This upheaval transferred both power and the fruits of corruption to the All People's Congress, headed by Siaka Stevens. Over the next seventeen years, Stevens made himself president of a one-party state. In the process, he co-opted the army and police into his regime while promoting various minorities within the military and creating a special security division as a counterpoise to the army. Most of the time, in fact, he kept the army's weapons locked up to prevent rebellion. When he retired, Stevens transferred power to his former military commander, Joseph S. Momoh.[8]

Under Stevens, toleration of illegal diamond exports plus corruption within the government caused a sharp decline in both the economy and public funding for education. Literacy fell to only 13.3 percent by 1991, while public unrest took the form of a Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Samuel K. Doe, the former sergeant who had seized control of neighboring Liberia in 1980, provided sanctuary for the RUF inside his country. Unfortunately for the local population, Doe also sent gangs of thugs to support the RUF, resulting in widespread rape and destruction in eastern Sierra Leone.[9] The ill-trained and often unpaid armed forces of Sierra Leone overthrew President Momoh on April 29, 1992, with a group of junior officers forming a temporary junta known as the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). In 1996, the military returned rule to a civilian president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

Still, the civil war continued. The local army grew to some 14,000, and the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) deployed 3,000 Nigerian and 1,500 Guinean troops to the capital of Freetown.[10]

In desperation, the NPRC junta had already turned to foreign mercenaries, apparently because private security companies had some success in protecting the mines. With the end of the Cold War and drawdown of the UK's army (see chapter 2), a group of former soldiers formed Gurkha Security Guards Limited (GSG). In February 1995, Robert MacKenzie, a veteran of the Rhodesian Special Air Service during that country's civil war, arrived in Rhodesia to reconnoiter

the RUF on behalf of GSG, but he and his team were promptly ambushed and killed, possibly betrayed by disgruntled Sierra Leonean soldiers.[11]

Undeterred, the NPRC turned to a larger, almost notorious security firm called Executive Outcomes, or EO. EO provided ex-Soviet helicopters and infantry fighting vehicles as well as training and logistics for local militia loyal to the new Kabbah government. In 1996, this combined effort located and devastated rebel RUF bases, forcing the RUF to sign a peace agreement in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on November 30. Yet, EO was so expensive—reportedly costing $56 million plus mineral rights concessions to the company's backer—that the new Kabbah government terminated the EO contract at the end of January 1997.[12]

Unfortunately for the peace of Sierra Leone, this termination proved premature. Both the army and the RUF were filled with many former slum dwellers who faced an uncertain future once demobilized. Early on the morning of May 25, 1997, a small group of soldiers freed and armed six hundred convicts, then led them in overwhelming the Nigerian ECOMOG guards and driving President Kabbah into exile. The new Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) gained widespread support from previous rebel groups but found itself in a struggle with ECOMOG troops that occupied the Lungi Airport outside Freetown. UN Security Council Resolution 1132 imposed economic sanctions. Unable to win militarily, the AFRC junta eventually allowed Kabbah to return to power,[13] but the RUF continued fighting until a further settlement was reached at Lomé, Togo, in July 1999.[14] A UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) replaced various previous UN structures, as well as ECOMOG; the International Monetary Fund and several reconciliation structures sought to bring closure to the troubled state.

Even this did not ensure public order, in part due to ongoing fighting in neighboring Liberia. Then in May 2000, while UNAMSIL was attempting to disarm remaining rebels, those rebels suddenly took several hundred hostages and surrounded a Gurkha unit of the Indian army. The precarious peace in Sierra Leone appeared to be collapsing. Fortunately for public safety, the British defence and foreign ministers persuaded Prime Minister Blair to authorize an intervention. A battalion of the Parachute Regiment occupied Lungi Airport while a further eight hundred Royal Marines waited off the coast. Brig. David Richards, the UK commander on the ground, persuaded President Kabbah not to flee; although London was acutely conscious of mission creep when it was already committed elsewhere, Richards promised arms and ammunition to the Kabbah government while taking de facto command of the situation. The British killed twenty RUF fighters and began to restore order.[15] Separately, the Indian government took action to free its hostages, sending a special forces

battalion of its own parachute regiment to disorganize the RUF and help the Gurkhas break out of encirclement (Operation Khukri).[16]

Liberia

Samuel Doe, the Liberian dictator who aided the RUF during the 1980s, had his own problems thereafter. In December 1989, Charles Taylor, Doe's former opponent in a Liberian election, used Libyan training and financing to invade Liberia from neighboring Côte d'Ivoire. Doe died in the ensuing civil war and Taylor became his successor, extorting money from Western businesses. While outsiders attempted to interpret Liberia in terms of the conflict between the elite of former American slaves' descendants and local residents, the immediate issue was often more a matter of who had access to wealth. Sixty thousand armed Liberians looted humanitarian aid convoys as well as villages. An estimated 150,000 died and 25,000 were raped during this lawless period. A 1995 peace agreement attempted to enact a power-sharing arrangement between seven different factions, but after Taylor apparently won a 1997 election the fighting resumed. Under extensive international sanctions, Taylor finally was forced into exile in 2003; nine years later a UN special court convicted him of various crimes in connection with the Sierra Leone conflict.[17]

France and Africa

During the Cold War, Paris had conducted a robust diplomatic and military strategy in Francophone Africa. In addition to its own economic interests, France was motivated by its sense of being a great power, its historical involvement in Africa, and a generalized opposition to "Communist" influences in the continent. In the mid-1970s, France signed defense and technical military cooperation agreements with eight of its former colonies in Central Africa. In addition to significant military deployments to trouble spots, Paris maintained semipermanent military bases in Gabon, Chad, the Central African Republic, and Djibouti. Moreover, in 1974 the small islands of Mayotte decided by plebiscite to remain under French rule when the rest of the area north of Mozambique, an archipelago known as Comoros, gained independence.[18]

Not all French military involvement in Africa had been fully visible. Beginning in 1975, Libya occupied and laid claim to the Aouzou Strip on its southern border with Chad, reflecting Mu'ammar al-Gaddhafi's territorial ambitions as well as the presence of uranium deposits in the area. Beyond that, Libyan forces also interfered repeatedly in the internal politics of Chad, producing a low-level border conflict. French troops intervened briefly in 1983–84 to separate the two sides before withdrawing. Then in March 1987, disaster struck the occupiers. Chadian troops of exile leader Hissène Habré, reportedly trained by France

and the United States, overran the fortified Libyan airfield at Wadi Doum in the Sahara. Libyan soldiers withdrew in some disorder, having suffered the loss of at least 3,000, as well as extensive armored equipment and much of Libya's regional reputation.[19]

After the end of the Cold War, the French government maintained a low profile in Africa, at least in terms of unilateral military action. In 1998, French doctrine shifted to include missions of "human security," while the French armed forces often provided the logistics and command framework for multinational operations, primarily with existing French allies in Africa. Paris also launched a sustained program to train African security forces for order and defense.[20] French staff officers, often with special operations experience, appeared as military advisers to the governments of several sub-Saharan states.

Central African Republic

Of the numerous hotspots in this region, one of the most consistently plagued was the Central African Republic (CAR). Despite possessing considerable mineral resources and some arable land, the landlocked country remained impoverished, while its location left it open to infiltration and interference from turbulent neighbors, including Chad, Sudan, and both Congos.

During the Cold War, the CAR suffered under various authoritarian governments. In return for the use of a base at Bouar in the west of the country, France tolerated the eccentricities of strongman-turned-emperor Jean-Bédel Bokassa ("Bokassa I") until 1979, when Bokassa made a deal with Libyan dictator Mu'ammar al-Gaddhafi of Libya and French troops removed him. The poorly paid CAR army mutinied a number of times, although representative democracy was at least nominally restored in 1993.[21] A decade later, longtime power broker François Bozizé, who had previously helped repress military uprisings, led his own coup and claimed to be elected president in 2005. Yet a variety of opposition groups continued rural violence, despite various attempts at mediation by al-Gaddhafi and others. In 2012, a loose group of various armed opposition groups, collectively referred to as Séléka ("coalition" in a major local language), emerged in northeastern CAR and seized the capital, Bangui. This movement drove Bozizé into exile, although the leader of Séléka resigned in 2014.[22] The UN Security Council authorized UNSCR 2127 in December 2013, creating what became known as MISCA (Mission international de soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduit africaine, or African-led international support mission to Central Africa). However, the African participants in MISCA mistrusted French troops, while the languages and religions of the MISCA contingents often caused friction with locals.[23]

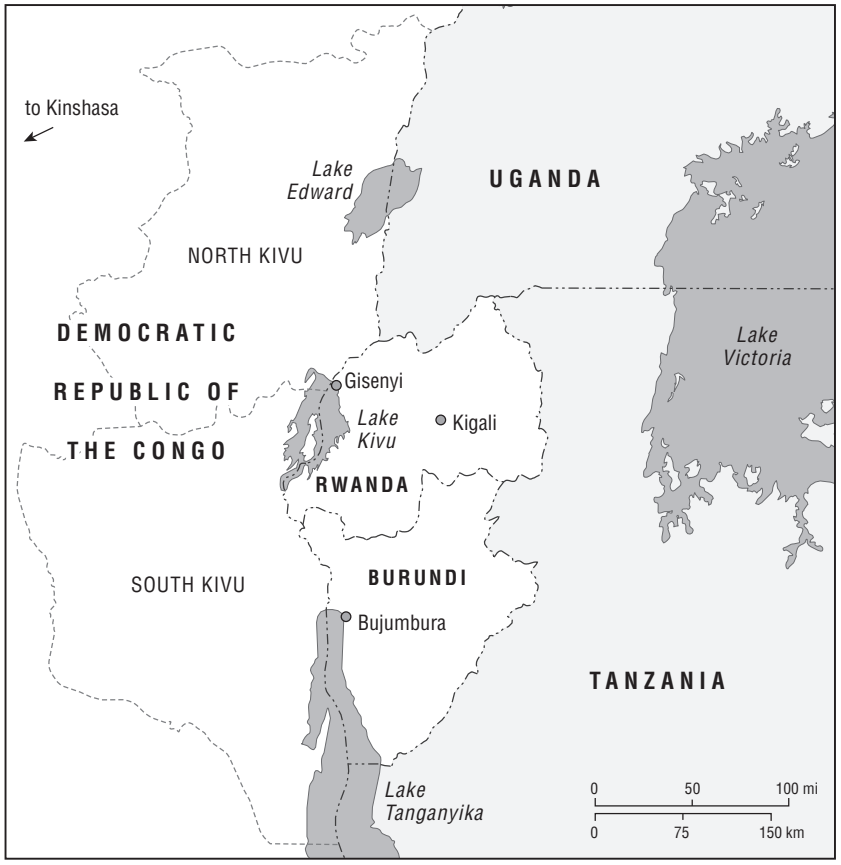
Comoros

The formerly French Comoros islands off the east coast of Africa have been plagued by poverty, corruption, and at least twenty coups or attempted coups, not to mention several disputed elections during the later twentieth century.[24] (Comoros also provided a convenient airfield for Western surveillance of the Indian Ocean.) In 1989 and again in 1995, the French garrison in nearby Mayotte rapidly restored government in Comoros; in the latter instance, a single company of French troops took only thirty minutes to repress an attempted coup by Bob Denard (aka Gilbert Bourgeaud), a soldier of fortune long associated with French and Comoran intrigue. Despite the French interventions, the country remained unstable, its situation escalating from a Chapter VI (settlement of disputes) to a Chapter VII (threats to the peace) issue under the UN Charter. In 2006, the local government asked for African Union help to protect elections, but the AU could find only 462 troops, who frequently intervened against potential rebels.[25]

Genocide in Rwanda

In Central Africa, the dense population of the mountainous uplands known as Rwanda was divided into three visibly different ethnic groups: the tall, thin, angular-faced Tutsi; the shorter, squatter large-headed Hutu; and a small number of pygmies known as Twa. Prior to German colonization in the late nineteenth century, a form of feudal society existed in which the king and most but not all tribal chieftains were Tutsi, although all three ethnicities served as soldiers when necessary. With few European administrators on the ground, first the Germans and then (upon conquering Rwanda in 1916) the Belgians ruled indirectly, reinforcing the existing structure and actually increasing the proportion of Tutsi in power. Moreover, the Western racialism so dominant during the later 1800s prompted both colonial powers to identify with the Tutsi, who appeared to be more "European." This racialist approach encouraged the Tutsi to think of themselves as superior, while Hutu suffered open discrimination. To add to the aggravation, the Belgians greatly expanded the requirements for forced labor by the Hutu.[26] All this created a lethal, irrational mindset in which many Hutu genuinely believed that the Tutsi were cloven-hoofed devils and resented them because of economic disparities. Tutsi attitudes were often equally twisted.

As Belgium prepared to withdraw effective January 28, 1961, various parties, often tribal- and ethnic-based, developed, but the Hutu won initial elections. Widespread violence both before and after independence prompted refugees,



Rwanda-Congo. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

mostly Tutsi, to flee to neighboring countries—336,000 by 1964. Those who settled in Uganda gained considerable experience in guerrilla tactics during the fighting that came after disputed elections there in 1980. By 1986, the Tutsi among the Ugandan rebel force had renamed themselves the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) and become more militant about a forcible return home.[27] Because much of the RPF originated among Rwandan families living in the former British colony of Uganda, French officials simplistically equated them with Anglophone influence and arrayed French power to support the Hutu in Rwanda.

At home, the Hutu-dominated Rwandan government staggered forward, with long periods of prosperity mixed with further violence. Maj. Gen. Juvénal Habyarimana, the defense minister, seized power on July 5, 1973, but he

continued pro-Hutu policies. In three rigged elections between 1978 and 1988, he remained in power, claiming ludicrous vote totals of 98 and 99 percent in his favor. His regime also resumed the colonial policy of forced labor; a drought and famine in 1988 only increased popular dissatisfaction. Habyarimana operated the country under a single party, the Mouvement révolutionaire national pour le développement (MRND, National Revolutionary Movement for Development), until public pressure, including RPF preparations to invade, forced him to authorize multiple parties in 1990.

In October 1990, the RPF invaded Rwanda from Uganda but suffered several setbacks, including the death of its first commander. His successor, Maj. Gen. Paul Kagame, was a tall, ascetic Tutsi who had become a refugee at a young age before gaining considerable experience in the Ugandan civil struggles.[28] Kagame shifted to Maoist protracted warfare, producing a three-sided struggle between Habyarimana's pro-Hutu army (the Forces Armées Rwandais, FAR), the internal opposition to his rule, and the RPF. Meanwhile, the Habyarimana government arrested more than 10,000 opponents, while 348 Tutsi were massacred at the beginning of the conflict. A number of foreign forces deployed to Kigali, but domestic politics prompted Brussels to withdraw its para-commandos in late October. Meanwhile, Zairian presidential guardsmen had to depart after being accused of raping a number of local women. French forces remained longer but were clearly dedicated to supporting the Hutu regime against the "Anglo-Saxon" invaders. The war continued without clear resolution for more than three years. Rwanda's national debt and inflation skyrocketed, while exiled Tutsi in many lands helped finance the RPF.[29] After a year of negotiations, a series of agreements known as the Arusha Accords, designed to create a new power-sharing government, was signed on August 4, 1993.

Caught in the middle of this while trying to maintain a nonexistent peace and protect civilians was the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), created by UNSCR 872 in October 1993 to build on an earlier attempt and enforce the dubious peace of Arusha. Even in its initial authorization, however, the Security Council urged the secretary-general to reduce UNAMIR to the smallest possible force.[30] The series of UN actions in Somalia, former Yugoslavia, and elsewhere had exhausted international support for peacekeeping, with most governments reluctant to risk their troops in unstable situations. The force commander of UNAMIR was Canadian major general Roméo Dallaire, who never received sufficient troops nor basic logistical support to accomplish the mission—only 2,500 soldiers against a requirement for 8,000, with shortages of food, water, and ammunition. Washington and Paris were unwilling to subordinate their troops to the restrictive rules of engagement specified by the UN; although Brussels sent a battalion, Belgian soldiers were very unpopular

because of Belgium's previous colonial role there, not to mention that they expended scarce ammunition for their training. Some Francophone African nations provided effective staff officers, and UN observers from around the globe gallantly attempted to maintain the peace; however, the soldiers offered by nations such as Bangladesh and Ghana, while brave, were often ill-equipped and ill-trained. The United States charged the UN $10 million for the use of worn-out, nonoperative armored personnel carriers previously employed in Somalia (and later claimed that these vehicles were a US contribution to peacekeeping), while the UK offered to send hundreds of aging trucks. In short, UNAMIR had neither the troops, nor the mobility, nor the firepower to gain respect in a country where virtually everyone was armed. Meanwhile, Dallaire and his observers warned that various party militias were secretly preparing lists of political opponents as well as ethnic Tutsi within the country.[31]

President Habyarimana had signed the Arusha Accords primarily to buy time, and months passed without implementation of the new power-sharing arrangements. Both sides had expanded their armed forces by hiring the unemployed, but there was no money to demobilize groups made up primarily of armed thugs. Apparently even the president's Hutu supporters believed that he had conceded too much power to the opposition. On April 6, 1994, as the president's personal aircraft was landing at the airport outside Kigali, it was shot down by two surface-to-air missiles that killed not only Habyarimana but also the FAR chief of staff and the head of state of Burundi. In a suspiciously well-coordinated attack, the Hutu party militia and the presidential guard immediately went on a rampage, although parts of the FAR attempted to restore order. Hutu militia raped and murdered Tutsi by the thousands over the next several weeks and killed the designated premier and other officials of the compromise government. When ten Belgian troops assigned to protect the premier were killed, Belgium withdrew its element of the already understrength UNAMIR force. A French infantry company landed briefly, but only to extricate Caucasians from the slaughter, while a US Marine company diverted to a nearby nation. Western embassies evacuated Kigali.[32]

Two days after the assassination, the RPF renewed hostilities, advancing on the capital and refusing to negotiate a ceasefire. Col. Théoneste Bagasora, one of the Hutu organizers of the assassination and the massacres, expended Rwandese Government Forces (RGF) in vain efforts to defend Kigali and Gisenyi, the latter a resort town near the Congolese border. The RGF withdrew from the capital on the night of July 3–4, 1994. Eventually, the RPF pushed some 2 million people, including the Hutu combatants, across the border into the Congo. These refugees settled into thirty-five armed camps, which the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was unable to service or control.

(UNHCR hoped for an early redeployment of these refugees to Rwanda, but the RPF had little desire to accept the return of such a disruptive element.)[33] The RPF declared a new interim government, with Pasteur Bizimungu, an RPF Hutu, as president, and Paul Kagame as vice president, on July 19, 1994. The unpaid troops continued to steal medical supplies and otherwise loot from humanitarian aid efforts. The total casualties of this genocide and civil war can never be determined but included at least 800,000 murder victims plus another 30,000 deaths due to cholera, with the disease spreading from unburied bodies.[34]

Some members of the UN Security Council denied the ongoing genocide and were reluctant to reinforce UNAMIR, which dwindled to 503 troops. Public outcry belatedly prompted independent actions by several states. Paris made secret agreements with both the RPF and the RGF, then negotiated UNSCR 929 on June 22, 1994, which mandated a UN Chapter VII peace enforcement operation that was not connected with UNAMIR. This provided a cover of legitimacy for France to intervene without fighting (Operation Turquoise); to accomplish this massive airlift, the French chartered a number of ex-Russian AN-12s plus other aircraft. They landed 2,500 troops, including paratroopers and foreign legionnaires, as well as helicopters, armored vehicles, and (to maintain the fiction of a multinational force) thirty-two Senegalese soldiers. This new effort declared a "Humanitarian Protection Zone" in western Rwanda, attracting some 1.3 million displaced persons, but without disarming the RGF in that area. Nor did France have the capacity to handle the resulting flows of frightened people. One French colonel, a former adviser to the RGF, was disciplined after publicly threatening to fight the RPF. Meanwhile, French troops hijacked UNAMIR-marked vehicles and shot at the RPF from them, further endangering the UN troops who remained after the French withdrawal. The US military began its own humanitarian efforts on July 21, but it was so concerned about risks to American troops that it operated from outside the country, which hampered relief distribution.[35] The presence of three distinct foreign forces—UNAMIR, French, and American—plus the return of NGOs contributed to the muddled and dangerous situation.

With no effective police or judicial system, only the Rwandan Patriotic Front was able to maintain any order in the country after the civil war. Vice President Kagame was the real power in Kigali, and he succeeded Bizimungu as president when the multiethnic government collapsed in 2000.[36]

Congo Wars Forever

The 1994 flood of refugees from Rwanda into Zaire, pursued by their Rwandese adversaries, proved to be the catalyst for major conflicts in the Congo River

basin. Like dropping stones into a bucket that was already filled to the brim, these intrusions created ripples that magnified and swamped existing rivalries. Forces within neighboring Burundi had begun a civil war in 1993, while in Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe ran an authoritarian regime that looted both the government and the businesses of the former British colonists. The year 1988 had witnessed the temporary cessation of the prolonged struggle in Angola, which remained an unstable regime torn by the internal rivalry between the ruling Mouvimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) and the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) centered in the east and south of the country. UNITA in particular was dependent on the government of Zaire to circumvent arms embargoes and address other economic issues. Joseph-Désiré Mobutu (self-named Mobutu Sese Seko Koko Ngbendu Wa Za Banga, or all-powerful and all-conquering warrior), a former colonial sergeant major, had controlled Zaire/Congo since 1965, but he barely maintained his grip on power in the 1990s.[37] Just as in Rwanda, the conflicting policies of major powers such as the United States and France often immobilized UN and other efforts to resolve issues. Tropical gangsters and underpaid civil servants alike took the opportunity to make private deals that further disordered the economy of the region; few leaders had any practical conception of how the region should or could function.

The former French colony of Congo-Brazzaville was the first to feel the effect of the Rwandan refugee flows. French-educated premier Pascal Lissouba had won the first round of civil conflict there after the 1992 elections, but he irritated various groups by making deals with both the French oil firm Elf and the US company Occidental Petroleum, after which he threatened to take over the nearby Angolan oil enclave that financed the MPLA. The influx of mostly Hutu refugees from Rwanda upset the fragile balance of militias in the country, leading to a renewed civil war that drove Lissouba into exile but left the country in a guerrilla conflict for the rest of the decade. In the process, 8,000 died and 700,000 were internally displaced.[38]

Worse befell the northern and eastern regions of Zaire, the former Belgian Congo. Mobutu had permitted or encouraged at least ten liberation armies to use the region as sanctuary. Among these was the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), Joseph Kony's Christian fundamentalist group from Uganda, later infamous for its child soldiers and atrocities. The LRA opposed the Ugandan government of Yoweri Museveni.[39] In addition to these armed foreign groups, the eastern province of Kivu contained the Bayamulenga group of ethnic Tutsi; traditional herders had settled what became South Kivu on their own, while Belgian colonists had imported other Tutsi as farm laborers in North Kivu. Other tribal groups resented the Bayamulenga, whom Mobutu had armed as his supporters.[40]

In fairness to the new regime in Kigali, its former opponents continued to cross the borders and raid inside Rwanda, while undisciplined Zairian soldiers sometimes looted the stricken country. When counterraids and diplomatic protests failed to deter these incursions, Paul Kagame consulted with his former boss, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, who shared his aversion to the armed exile groups in eastern Zaire. Museveni apparently counseled him to avoid any great power reaction to his forthcoming attack on Zaire by cloaking the attackers as a Congolese rebel group. José dos Santos, the MPLA ruler of Angola, reportedly offered Kagame the *Tigres*, an expatriate group of Katangan rebels, to help fight Mobutu. Radio propaganda helped recruit 34,000 Tutsi from North Kivu to join the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA).[41]

RPA veterans began to infiltrate into South Kivu, the ethnic Tutsi district along the eastern border of Zaire. In September 1996, Kagame fired an artillery concentration and attacked across the border into the refugee camps in Zaire. In cooperation with Museveni of Uganda, Kagame used a cover story to conceal the invasion, attributing most of the action to the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Liberation du Congo-Zaire (AFDL), an RPF-inspired merger of four small opposition groups within Zaire.

The most visible spokesman of the AFDL was Laurent-Désiré Kabila, a Marxist politician and guerrilla who had been active in Congolese affairs since the ill-fated 1965 attempt by Che Guevara to provoke a revolution in the Congo. While the Bayamulenga and various Rwandese armed groups attacked the refugee camps, killing both armed opponents and civilians, the AFDL with clandestine RPF support advanced westward toward the capital, Kinshasa. Many of Kabila's soldiers were unemployed Congolese teenagers, given brief but harsh basic training that included a Marxist political orientation. The Congolese government's Forces Armées de Zaire (FAZ), unpaid and riddled with corruption, put up relatively little resistance, but foreign states became involved. France imported some Bosnian Serb mercenaries and heavy weapons, but those weapons were poorly maintained. Having begun to train the new Rwandan army, the United States was disinclined to interfere militarily, and US Ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson failed to convince Mobutu that he should step down. Jonas Savimbi sent UNITA troops in a vain effort to save his Congolese ally, but this force only delayed the AFDL/RPA advance for one week in April 1997, after which the ailing Mobutu went into exile; he died of cancer seven months later.[42]

Thus ended the first phase (September 1996–May 1997) of the Congolese conflict. Kabila declared himself president, but his Marxist background left him ill-equipped to understand the black marketeering and corruption that wracked Congo-Zaire's export economy of diamonds and other materials.

Kabila's government surrendered many of these resources to pay its Angolan and Zimbabwean defenders. Refugees scattered—some were massacred while others fled toward Kinshasa or into neighboring countries. Again, no states were willing to provide a robust multinational force to restore order. Some 6,000 ex-FAR soldiers hid inside Zaire, while an estimated 213,000 people were missing or murdered by the end of that round of fighting. One of the worst massacres occurred on March 1, 1997, when several thousand were killed at Tingi-Tingi in northeastern Zaire. Rwanda had such control over the new government in Kinshasa that it, in cooperation with Robert Mugabe as chairman of the OAU, blocked investigations of such genocide. As a consequence, the rest of the world was unwilling to help the AFDL repair Zaire's economy.[43]

Eastern Zaire remained violent while Kabila chafed at Rwandese control. After touching base with his Cuban patrons, in July 1998 he demanded that the Rwandese forces withdraw. The RPA began to do so, but then on August 3, 1998, it reversed course and attacked into Congo-Zaire. This quarrel between former allies initiated the second phase of the Congolese War, which lasted until June 2003. While Kabila appealed for popular support, his reorganized Forces Armées Congolaises counterattacked the RPA remaining in the capital, Kinshasa. Renewed anti-Tutsi pogroms ensued elsewhere in the country. Former Mobutu minister Jean-Pierre Bemba allied his supporters with the Ugandans against Chadian agents inside Zaire. Foreign interventions helped Kabila's defenders against the self-described Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD), which Kagame organized to include a number of intellectuals as well as other former Mobutu supporters. Angolan president José dos Santos deployed aircraft, tanks, and troops to assist Kabila, while South African mercenaries flew Mi-17 helicopters to attack the RCD's supply lines. Zimbabwe sent 2,800 troops and twenty-one tons of weapons. When frantic RCD rebels sought shelter in Kinshasa during late August, the city's population beat them to death. Eventually, as the conflict dragged on, Rwandese and Ugandan troops quarreled and began fighting each other instead of Kabila's supporters. In August 1999, a year later, a supposed peace agreement was reached at Lusaka after months of American and French efforts, but it was more of a wish list than a practical agreement, and neither the participants nor the international community were willing to implement it.[44]

In the midst of indecisive maneuvering and private profiteering, on January 16, 2001, a disgruntled supporter assassinated Kabila for reasons that remain disputed. Kabila's supporters inserted his son, Joseph, as interim head of government, but Joseph proved much more astute than his handlers had anticipated. He built support at home and abroad, terminated restrictive commodities contracts, and (in marked contrast to his Rwandan adversaries)

invited renewed inquiry into massacres. Faced with 2.3 million internally displaced people and a shattered economy, Joseph Kabila dragged his feet on implementing the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, and Resettlement protocols of peace agreements. Then in February 2001 he suddenly arrested most of his former managers/advisers. Eighteen months later, he persuaded the World Bank to loan $454 million to Congo/Zaire. In December 2002, Kabila reached another peace agreement in Pretoria that left him as president of a power-sharing government.[45]

The other participants in the long Congo-Zaire war gradually withdrew. Savimbi died in a firefight with Angolan government forces in February 2002, thereby reducing UNITA's destabilizing role; Namibia had already withdrawn its forces from the region, and even the meddling Gaddhafi, weakened by sanctions after the Lockerbie bombing of 1991, withdrew his defeated Chadian surrogates. Congo-Zaire temporarily returned to peace in 2003, although its economy was weakened for decades.[46]

In December 2008, Uganda and Zaire launched a combined Operation Lightning Thunder in an attempt to eliminate the Lord's Resistance Army in northeastern Congo-Zaire. Although the US Africa Command had provided training and intelligence, the LRA was able to scatter without losing its senior leadership. Once again, up to 200,000 civilians became internally displaced by the effort.[47]

Four years later, in April 2012, North Kivu was again the center of violence when a movement known as March 23 (M23) rebelled against the Kinshasa government, displacing many inhabitants and temporarily capturing the resort city of Goma. With the Congolese army still largely ineffectual, the UN Security Council tried a radical change to traditional peacekeeping: it created an intervention brigade within the renamed Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo (MONUSCO).[48] MONUSCO grew in combat power and strength to more than 18,000 troops, with India making the largest contribution. This reinvigorated effort forced some of M23 into exile while others signed a peace with Kinshasa, although M23 and other militias resumed their violent attacks in the region in 2021.[49] In 2024, M23 besieged the Congolese city of Goma, on the border with Rwanda; the Rwandan government reportedly supplied the besiegers with advanced weaponry in an effort to discourage the Congolese government from supporting a Hutu militia in the area.[50]

In 2019, Joseph Kabila permitted the first peaceful political transition since his country's independence, yielding power (after a possibly rigged election) to Félix Tshisekedi, son of a well-known former prime minister who had opposed Mobutu. Yet, this rare moment of constitutional democracy could not overcome

the combined issues of ethnic rivalry, neighbor state interference, and corruption in the Congo. That same year, Tshisekedi invited Rwanda, still ruled by Kagame, to send troops across the Congolese border to repress a terrorist group, but the resulting power vacuum only encouraged the remnants of M23 to renew their efforts. President Tshisekedi accused Rwanda of supporting this largely Tutsi group, and the cycle of regional bloodshed and suffering resumed.[51]

Sudan and Darfur

Like most other colonies that did not include European settlers, Sudan experienced only minimal development during its eighty years of British rule. The large urban conglomeration around the capital of Khartoum developed businesses, educational institutions, professional classes, and light industry, while farther up the Blue and White Nile Rivers, an elaborate irrigation system grew cotton for export. In the rest of the country, however, the British invested only a minimum in governance, education, and transportation infrastructure. In southeastern Sudan, the rulers encouraged Christian missionaries in part to create a buffer against African Islam; when Khartoum imposed Muslim education and even personal names on the people of the area after independence, it provoked a long-standing if low-grade insurrection. Indeed, the Muslim, Arab rulers of the newly independent state generally followed the British model of encouraging confessional and ethnic antagonisms to keep any potential opposition divided. Most of the former colony was gripped by grinding poverty and resentment against taxation by the central government.[52] While Christians sought autonomy in the southeast, however, it was Darfur that acquired worldwide notoriety for ethnic violence.

Darfur is a remote plateau of desert and savannah located to the south and west of Sudan, an area that has frequently produced threats to the region's rulers. Muhammad Ahmad, the self-proclaimed "Mahdi" religious leader who challenged British control of the Sudan during the 1880s, took refuge at times in Darfur, which subsequently produced a number of attempts to revive that movement. Rumors that the Ottoman Turks were arming a jihadi rebellion prompted a British-led colonial force to occupy Darfur in May 1916, leading to the uneasy subordination of the province to Khartoum. More recently, Darfur's location put it in the center of Mu'ammar al-Gaddhafi's attempts to build Pan-Arabism in the region, as noted above. In 1980–81, a Libyan force arrived in Chad, driving the local ruler Hissène Habré to take refuge in Darfur. From there, Habré's forces conducted cross-border raids that eventually defeated Libya in 1987.[53]

Quite apart from external interference, Darfur faced a number of inherent internal problems. Disputes over land rights in the semiarid region became

Darfur and Sudan. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

more divisive and controversial after a series of droughts between 1973 and 1984 led to famine during the 1980s. Whereas nomadic Arabs had previously warned local farmers before coming near their farms, now they were so desperate that they allowed their herds to trample the crops and even attacked farmers who defended their fields. In addition to tribal or clan divisions, various ethnic groups, most notably Arabs, Masalit, and Fur, were mutually suspicious ("Darfur" means "land of the Fur" in Arabic). This rivalry became worse in 1989, when a military coup in Khartoum brought the National Islamic Front (NIF) led by Omar al-Bashir to power; five years later, the NIF gerrymandered new boundaries to divide Darfur into three smaller states or provinces that reduced the Fur to a minority in some places. The new system also named Arabs to positions as emirs (princes), making clear the intention to eliminate the other ethnic groups from local government. This increased the preexisting antagonism between the central government and peripheral groups.[54] The NIF decimated the middle classes, education, and medicine in Sudan by insisting that all instruction be conducted in Arabic and include study of the Koran.

Even before this subdivision, local resistance movements and violence rose steadily during the 1980s, with various ethnic groups struggling against the central government. That government's preoccupation with Islamization reinvigorated the rebellion in southeastern Sudan, especially under the influence of the brilliant and charismatic John Garang. Garang had joined the Sudanese army in 1971 after an early truce with the southern Sudanese rebels—he was not only a PhD in economics from Iowa State University but also a graduate of the US Army Infantry Advance Course. In 1983, he rejoined the southern rebels, becoming a mastermind of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Mengistu Haile Miriam, the Marxist leader of Somalia, provided arms to the SPLA during the 1980s, but Garang continued to lead this rebellion until he died in a helicopter crash in 2005.[55]

The rebellion and violence blossomed in both the south and west of Sudan. Regardless of realities on the ground, the central government tended to arm Arabs it assumed were loyal while disarming all others, even local police. Despite or perhaps because of this bias, numerous armed groups arose, of which the most prominent were the SPLA and the Justice and Equality Movement, the latter an Islamist group. The United States, intent on limiting al-Gaddhafi and later the Islamist Khartoum government, also allegedly aided the SPLA during the 1980s. In response, the Sudanese government armed six brigades of loyalist Arab militia or police usually referred to as the Janjaweed, trying to drive the non-Arabs out of Darfur in a form of ethnic cleansing. Imbued with a belief in Arab superiority, these militiamen looted and laid waste to

other tribes. Often mounted on horseback, the Janjaweed became infamous for village burnings, rapes, and massacres, the latter giving rise to accusations of genocide.[56]

Khartoum continued to push Islamism, creating the Popular Arab and Islamic Congress in 1991. This attracted interest from the PLO, Hezbollah, and al-Qaeda; bin Laden reportedly gave the group $5 million to create training camps for mujahideen.[57]

After repeated interethnic violence in Darfur, on January 17, 1999, a group of Masalit farmers ambushed a local Arab leader and his bodyguard near the small town of Tabarik. The resulting violence was so significant—up to 2,000 Sudanese were killed—that the central government sent a company of regular troops and several attack helicopters, which temporarily restored order without resolving the issue.[58]

With violence, refugees, and displaced people on the rise in Darfur, Western public opinion became increasingly concerned and NGOs accepted great risks to aid those suffering. Open rebellion began by at least 2002. The territory was so remote, however, that deploying either humanitarian aid or troops there was difficult, and accusations of genocide and war crimes made Khartoum reluctant to cooperate with the international community. Beginning in 2004, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) attempted to separate the opponents, but it lacked the forces to restore peace.

Although the 9/11 attacks distracted public attention from the burgeoning violence in Sudan, the newly declared American War on Terror led to increased pressure from the Bush administration to end the Islamic extremism of the Khartoum government. In December 1999, al-Bashir had already forcibly removed Hassan al-Turabi, the leading advocate of such extremism, from the speakership of the Sudanese legislature. Now, under thinly veiled threats from the Bush administration, the al-Bashir government offered to share some intelligence and sought to tone down the genocidal violence or at least the appearance of it. Washington also pressed for a peace deal before the 2004 elections in the United States.[59]

After another crescendo of fighting during 2003–4, possibly the work of hard-liners within the Sudanese army, the Khartoum government tried to dictate a Darfur Peace Agreement at Abuja, Nigeria, in May 2006. Many of the rebel groups had no input on the power-sharing formula that gave the government 50 percent; John Garang reluctantly signed on, becoming the nominal first vice president of Sudan, but only one self-aggrandizing rebel leader in Darfur, Minni Minnawi, signed the agreement. Even the Arab residents of Darfur were excluded from actual negotiations, and none of the participants, including the government, was prepared to abjure violence. Nutrition and

health for displaced persons actually improved thereafter, but the continued toll of 200–300 deaths per month, some of them government soldiers, fed the Western perception of ongoing genocide.[60] The Khartoum government argued that this peace agreement should be rewarded by foreign aid and relaxed sanctions, but little changed in Sudan. Instead, Khartoum persisted in launching periodic offensives, while insurgents and unidentified others repeatedly ambushed humanitarian aid workers and peacekeepers.[61]

The UN Security Council voted (UNSCR 1706, August 31, 2006) to combine the AMIS force with a United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)—but no one had obtained Khartoum's concurrence. The Sudanese government cleverly exploited disagreements within the Security Council, especially China's reluctance to infringe on national sovereignty, and then objected to specific troop contributions coming from Scandinavian nations and other states it considered unfriendly.[62] The net result of these efforts was to delay the UN deployment until 2008. When the International Criminal Court indicted President al-Bashir in March 2009, he threatened to expel all the relief agencies in the country.[63]

Despite much resistance from the both sides—and some reluctance from the African Union itself—UNAMID belatedly deployed. By this point, however, the continuous demand for funds and troops in Afghanistan and Iraq meant that many Western nations were unable to contribute to UNAMID. UN members never provided either the necessary funds and vehicles or the authorized level of troops (6,422 police and 19,555 soldiers, with another 10,000 dedicated to protecting the Christian southeast). In 2017, UNAMID began a deliberate drawdown and relocation of its forces, including the creation of state liaison teams to assist in establishing effective government functions.[64]

Upon John Garang's death in a helicopter crash, one month after the peace agreement, the far less charismatic Salva Kiir Mayardit succeeded to the vice presidency of Sudan and the leadership of southern Sudan. The minor town of Juba became the unlikely capital of the latter, but it struggled to build even office space, let alone effective institutions. Of the oil profits reluctantly disbursed by Khartoum, 70 percent went to build southern Sudan's defense forces, while foreign donors were even more reluctant to release aid money. A plebiscite led to independence for South Sudan in July 2011, but interethnic fighting continued even there.[65]

In the midst of the mixed success of foreign peacekeeping, a series of events in Sudan significantly changed the political situation. In April 2019, the Sudanese military removed al-Bashir from power, replacing him with a self-named Transitional Military Council. On June 3, 2019, however, the Janjaweed (redesignated as Rapid Support Forces) shocked observers by attacking a peaceful protest in Khartoum, killing 128, raping 70, and inflicting hundreds of other injuries. The international reaction to this violence was so massive that the

council had to make a number of concessions, including entering into a power-sharing government with some of its opponents.[66] Yet, none of these agreements have provided much protection to the various ethnic groups involved. In the summer of 2023, fighting erupted in Khartoum between the commanders of the Rapid Support Forces and of the Sudanese army. This violence spread to Darfur, again producing huge numbers of displaced persons.

Islamism in Africa

The genocidal conflicts in Rwanda, the Congos, and Darfur occurred against the backdrop of burgeoning Islamism in Africa. The rise and temporary success of al-Qaeda encouraged would-be radicals, who sought prestige and in some instances funding and training from bin Laden's group. Three Islamist groups were particularly violent on the continent: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Boko Haram, and al-Shabaab.

Algeria had been a hotbed of violence, some of it religiously motivated, since the French colonial conflict there in 1954–62. During the 1980s, the Marxist-oriented government of the country tried to block Algerian radicals who wanted to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. This struggle culminated in 1992, when the army attempted to prevent an Islamist party from winning elections. Domestic disorders ensued, but by the end of the decade the Algerian army was succeeding against the extremists.[67]

One of the surviving opposition groups was the Groupe Salafiste pour le Prédication et le Combat (GSPC, Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat). In 2007, the GSPC's Abdelmalek Droukdel decided to ally with al-Qaeda, swearing fealty to bin Laden and redesignating the group as AQIM. He attempted in vain to make AQIM the leader of all al-Qaeda efforts in Africa. Among other public relations maneuvers, Droukdel recruited activists to fight in Iraq and took hostages in a vain attempt to force France to pull out of Afghanistan.[68]

Yet, Droukdel was unable to control the activists in the semiarid terrain south of the Sahara, where they evolved into Al-Qaeda in the Sahel (AQS). AQS allegedly coordinated with local Tuareg tribesmen rebelling against the governments in the area. Initially, the governments of Mauritania, Mali, and Niger lacked the resources to control such radicalism, but eventually both the European Union and the United States provided aid and military assistance to build the sovereign power of these states. Meanwhile, however, the Libyan civil war of 2011 (see chapter 11) provided additional munitions for radicals in the region. Because it failed to grow its own food, to raise funds AQS became involved in smuggling drugs and undocumented workers as well as kidnapping Westerners for ransom. In March 2016, AQIM claimed responsibility for a terror attack on two resort hotels in Côte d'Ivoire that killed nineteen and wounded twenty-seven.[69]

Four years earlier, in March 2012, a junta of Malian army officers, frustrated that it was losing its struggle against radicalism, seized power in Bamako but encountered widespread economic sanctions and condemnation. The Economic Community of West African States attempted to intervene but lacked the resources to do so effectively. In December, UN Security Council Resolution 2085 authorized the African Union to intervene in Mali, an effort known as the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). Before the AU was able to mobilize forces, however, the Tuareg insurgents rebelled for the fourth time since independence, seizing cities in northern Mali. France conducted Operation Serval to disperse the radicals in the area, employing a total of three light armored brigades (Foreign Legion and Marine Infantry) plus a parachute brigade and extensive air support. The French troops eventually restored some order, withdrawing officially by mid-2013, although a smaller French contingent remained to cooperate with AFISMA. The combined French and AFISMA force peaked at 11,400 peacekeepers, with the French providing much of the command and communications to integrate the force.[70]

Thereafter, AQIM and AQS remained potent terrorist threats but were less effective against their regional opponents. A French special operations group killed Droukdel in northern Mali in June 2020, but the result of an air strike nearby on January 3, 2021, was not so clear-cut. France dropped two US-made, laser-guided GBU-12s that killed twenty-two people; UN and third-party observers concluded that, like the more famous similar instance of a Saudi strike in Yemen in 2018, the target was actually a wedding party, although France continued to describe it as a meeting of Islamist terrorists.[71]

The French concerns about terrorism often became intermingled with local political instability. Governmental corruption and incompetence as well as jihadism and smuggling compounded the challenges of a growing population in Mali. In August 2020, protests and a military coup deposed Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, the elected president since 2013. A second coup followed only nine months later.[72]

In 2022, the Mali government requested the withdrawal of all French troops, preferring to rely on the Russian mercenary Wagner Group (see chapter 12) to fight Islamists. Six months later, Burkina Faso also ended its alliance with Paris. It remains to be seen whether these two states can defend themselves from extremists.[73]

Boko Haram

Overlapping with some AQIM efforts was the Nigerian organization that called itself Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal Jihad (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad), an almost exact parallel

to the French language title for the Algerian GSPC. In practice, this group is usually known as Boko Haram (or Harum), which roughly translates as "fake [Western education] is forbidden [or sacrilege]."[74]

During much of the colonial era, London had ruled northeastern Nigeria indirectly through a series of emirs. The majority Muslim population of this area had a culture of derision for Western education, as reflected in its informal name; prior to the outbreak of violence, there were several vain efforts to include a Sharia court in the Nigerian Constitution, although in 1999 one regional state did recognize Sharia as a source of law in the otherwise English common law structure. The inland area was also characterized by poverty, illiteracy, and poor public health, while resentment against corruption and repression alienated much of the northern populace. In 1979, an antisecular, antimodernization rebellion known as the Maitatsine uprisings broke out, a clear precursor of Boko Haram. Beginning in 1995, a similar opposition group developed gradually, beginning with peaceful if ideologically extreme demonstrations but eventually becoming radicalized and gaining strength by attacks on police stations. By one report, the group known as Boko Haram contacted GSPC, the forerunner of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, in 2003 seeking training for Nigerian radicals; the group may also have received some funding, training, and direction directly from bin Laden's al-Qaeda. In 2005, Nigerian security forces raided a radical camp that was informally called "Afghanistan," but the movement went underground briefly before reemerging.[75]

Despite its condemnation of modernity, the new movement used cell phones and the Internet to recruit and organize its followers. In 2009, a coordinated Nigerian police and army effort temporarily repressed violence in the northern area and killed up to eight hundred. The movement recovered, however, and in the absence of senior leaders it became more difficult to trace. In fact, the security forces were so corrupt that many policemen were unpaid while others alienated the populace by looting and summary execution of suspects. With endorsement (in 2010) and some aid from AQIM, the Nigerian militants conducted spectacular suicide bombings (thirty-six between June 2011 and December 2012) while also attacking Christians, including through a series of lethal church bombings on Christmas Day 2011. By 2013, at least 25,000 people had died while UNHCR recorded that, in addition to internal displacements, 6,240 Nigerian refugees had fled to neighboring Niger.[76]

Boko Haram achieved worldwide attention by a series of mass abductions of female students; the movement also murdered teachers, and its campaign of intimidating teachers brought education in northern Nigeria to a virtual halt, adding to the region's economic misery. The movement apparently sought to create an African equivalent of the Taliban theocracy in Nigeria. Fortunately

for regional peace, they have so far failed, in part constrained by US-backed counterterrorism efforts. Boko Haram split in 2011–12. Khalid al-Barnawi broke away from the main movement for ideological reasons, forming a separate group called Ansaru, which claimed to be a direct branch of al-Qaeda.[77] The main element of Boko Haram sought support from the Islamic State (IS), which at least improved the production quality of its videos.[78] In the early 2020s, the Boko Haram brand transported itself to Chad, where drought and food insecurity made people willing to consider radical solutions.

Somalia, al-Shabaab, and Kenya

Somali misery did not improve after the 1994 departure of US troops and phased withdrawal of UN forces; the clan interference with humanitarian aid only made the situation more desperate as the country struggled with anarchy. A Transitional Federal Government attempted to restore order between 2004 and 2012; after 2007 it received help from the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) but was hindered by its own ineffective bureaucracy and unpopularity. Eventually, a new federal government with limited authority replaced the TFG.

Beginning in 2008, the misery, famine, and lawlessness within Somalia fueled the rapid growth of piracy off the coast, forcing international naval efforts to protect normal commerce as well as aid shipments. In addition to the traditional Hoboyo-Haradhere cartel, independent gangs of twelve to thirty-five men, armed with machine guns, rifles, and RPGs, began boarding any likely looking target and holding it for ransom; in one instance a gang tried to board a French warship that they mistook for a civilian vessel! Central Command's Combined Task Force 151, which had formed soon after 9/11 to monitor terrorism off the Horn of Africa, cooperated with NATO (Operation Ocean Shield) and the European Union (Operation Atalanta) to repress if not completely eliminate piracy in the region.[79]

At the same time, because Islam seemed to offer one of the few identity factors that transcended clan loyalties, al-Shabaab (literally, "the youth") emerged as a radical militia. Somalia was a hotbed of Wahhabism and anti-Western rhetoric, but the actual role of al-Qaeda in this struggle is unclear. Al-Shabaab openly recruited foreign fighters, including Somalis living in the West, with Americans, Canadians, and other foreign residents providing many of the suicide bombers beginning in 2006.[80]

Faced with growing terrorism and the influx of half a million Somali refugees, the Kenyan government finally attempted to disrupt al-Shabaab by invading southern Somalia in October 2013 (Operation Linda Nchi, a Swahili phrase meaning "protect the nation"). Like Israel's invasion of Lebanon in

1982 (Operation Peace for Galilee), the Kenyan advance led only to an attritional occupation of the subject country. Perhaps because Kenya already had a large troop commitment to AMISOM, this much ballyhooed attack initially involved only 2,000 Kenyan regulars and perhaps 4,000 Somali militiamen, a force too small to control the insurgency. Moreover, the attack was delayed by the *deyr* rains, a lesser wet season that occurs each fall. Insufficient force and poor weather hampered the initial advance, allowing much of the al-Shabaab leadership to evade capture. The Kenyans did seize the port of Kismaayo, a principal source of al-Shabaab funds, and attempted to establish a buffer zone inside southern Somalia. Yet they fell well short of ending the terrorist threat while incurring costs they could not sustain. Uganda, Burundi, and other states contributed thousands of troops to AMISOM but had no better success than the United States had achieved two decades earlier.[81]

Surviving portions of al-Shabaab unleashed a series of spectacular bombings inside Kenya, such as the Westgate shopping mall attack of September 2013, which left at least sixty-five dead. Such acts not only disrupted the Kenyan economy but forced businesses to incur significant expenses for their own security forces. Al-Shabaab developed an affiliate known as al-Hijra, including Somali expatriates and others, inside Kenya.[82] The combination of terrorism and economic hardship only exacerbated discontent in the country.[83] At the same time, the misery and lawlessness within Somalia fueled the emergency of piracy off the coast, forcing international naval efforts to protect normal commerce as well as aid shipments.

Within Somalia, al-Shabaab conducted more conventional attacks against the Kenya Defence Forces, culminating on January 15, 2016, when the radicals overran the Kenyan base at El Adde in southwestern Somalia. Kenya lost more than 140 killed plus a number of prisoners; the battle was the most significant defeat of AMISOM.[84] By contrast, in a 2001 referendum the former colony of British Somaliland, adjacent to Djibouti, somehow got public support to transition into a functioning independent democracy despite the same poverty and overpopulation that troubled other African countries.[85]

Assessment

Since the end of the Cold War and the resulting reduction in great power involvement, Africa has suffered more military violence for its population than any other continent. Whether motivated by ideology or by power and greed, many local leaders encouraged genocidal racism and religious prejudice to produce multiple wars and pogroms that did little except increase the misery of the affected populace. Western powers were discouraged by their previous legacy of colonial involvement and distracted by the heavy and prolonged

demand for forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, making effective peacekeeping intervention unlikely in a continent with poor transportation infrastructure. In the early 2020s, while warfare in the Middle East and Ukraine monopolized the headlines, violence and suffering continued unabated in much of Africa.

CHAPTER 10

Protracted Insurgencies

Iraq and Afghanistan

The United States had sent troops into Afghanistan to eliminate a terrorist base and Iraq to overthrow a dangerous and repressive regime. Particularly in Afghanistan, however, the *implied* task of creating a stable, pluralistic society that would not host terrorists was not clearly identified. On the contrary, in 2001 President George W. Bush had explicitly rejected any form of "nation building," by which he meant efforts such as those that failed to establish governments in Somalia and Haiti; two years later, then-Senator Joseph Biden described forming an Afghan nation as the only alternative to chaos.[1] Consequently, military commanders found themselves repeatedly asking for more troops and funds than Washington was willing to allocate. Success might have been possible had not both states been torn apart by insurgencies. The result was eight years of struggle in Iraq and almost two decades in Afghanistan. As described in chapter 8, the decision to overthrow Saddam Hussein before Afghanistan was stabilized left the United States with insufficient troops and often insufficient funds to achieve its goals in either country. Nor was it able successfully to recruit and train local security forces so that it could transfer the burden of the war to the new governments. Just as in Somalia, Haiti, and other troubled states, the inability to produce effective and nonpartisan police forces made law, order, and public safety impossible. Ultimately, Western-led coalitions achieved a fragile, temporary balance in Iraq, only to see that balance destroyed by Iraq's own leaders and by Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) attackers, leading to a limited return of US forces in 2013 (see chapter 11). In war-torn Afghanistan, the shortages of security forces plus a series of political misjudgments contributed to the Taliban victory of 2021. No one study can hope to recount all these developments, but what follows is an attempt to summarize the "Global War on Terror" once the occupation of these two states settled into a violent routine in 2004–5.

Doctrine and Practice

The limited numbers of Western post–Cold War armed forces, even including reserve components, were insufficient to maintain large contingents in multiple countries on a sustained basis. The September 11, 2001, attacks motivated many patriotic Americans to enlist, but the force structure was inadequate for long-term war. Even in 2004, Secretary Rumsfeld was forced to request a congressional increase in active-duty end strength. In addition to lengthening the tours of duty inside Iraq, the Army offered bonuses to soldiers who extended their assignments to Korea, an action that, for the 2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division (which then redeployed from Korea to Iraq), meant a total of three years away from families. Eight National Guard brigades served in Iraq during 2005–6, a total of more than 69,000 guardsmen, including the headquarters of New York State's 42nd Infantry Division, in-country as of March 2005. Most active-duty discharges were stopped, and 5,600 members of the individual ready reserve experienced involuntary recall to active duty.[2]

While the Iraqi and Afghan struggles developed, the US armed forces undertook a significant reexamination of the insurgency problem. As commander of the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth (2005–7), then-Lt. Gen. David Petraeus, already a veteran of two major assignments in Iraq, supervised the joint Army-Marine effort that eventually produced Field Manual 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency*, at the end of 2006.[3] Historian and retired army colonel Conrad Crane was the lead author of chapter 1 of the FM, which attempted to synthesize existing scholarship on the nature and theory of insurgency and counterinsurgency (COIN).[4] This study recognized the long-term nature of insurgency, which sought to exhaust the will of the occupying power by sustained if limited attacks by the weaker insurgents. Mao Zedong had labeled this process as protracted insurgency. Countering that attritional approach by the insurgents required synchronizing the available levers of national power for years and often decades. Above all, the new manual observed that the "cornerstone of any COIN effort is establishing security for the civilian populace."[5] This focus on protecting, aiding, and involving the civilians against the insurgents became known as the population-centric approach to COIN.

Like all US Army field manuals, FM 3-24 sometimes appeared to emulate the nineteenth-century theorist Antoine-Henri de Jomini by providing a checklist approach to complex problems.[6] Moreover, the population-centric approach required a long-term, patient, and consistent military effort, including a sustained cost in blood and treasure, that was directly contrary to the traditional American desire for rapid, decisive victory followed by prompt withdrawal and

demobilization. Nonetheless, this field manual provided a clear philosophical statement of the methodology to counter the two simultaneous insurgencies that the United States faced. Although a few commanders concluded that this methodology did not fit their situation, in general the difficulty was not in understanding that methodology but rather in applying it to situations of multiconfessional, multiethnic "complexification"—an invented word that often described the problems in the two war zones.

At the core of this complexification in Iraq was the American relationship with the new Baghdad government and especially with its prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki. Al-Maliki had been a middle-class, Shi'a layman who joined the Dawa Party while in college and was driven into exile along with much of that party during the later 1970s. He spent two decades in Damascus as part of the Iraqi opposition movement sponsored by Syrian intelligence, then returned to Iraq to join the transitional government in 2003. After the December 2005 Iraqi elections, US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad had encouraged al-Maliki as a counterweight to Iranian influences, and the Iraqi had gained election as prime minister by a one-vote majority in the Iraqi parliament. This made him dependent on the support of the militant Muqtada al-Sadr, with whom he had a difficult relationship for several years.[7]

More practically, in confronting the insurgents, the very procedures that the US Army had developed to achieve tactical success against conventional opponents often worked against it. For decades, soldiers had learned that when ambushed, the wisest response was to maximize firepower while attacking out of the kill zone, seeking to close with and disrupt the ambushers. When executed in an urban area, especially after a roadside bomb had exploded, this immediate action drill often meant inflicting casualties among the local civilian populace, people whose worst offense might have been being too intimidated to warn of the presence of insurgents.[8] Just as the insurgent theorist Che Guevara had predicted four decades earlier, sudden guerrilla attacks often provoked what appeared to be—or might be misrepresented as being—a violent overreaction by the regular troops, thereby turning the population against the occupiers. On March 4, 2007, for example, the recently activated and deployed 1st Marine Special Operations Task Force encountered a combined suicide bomb and Taliban ambush in Afghanistan; the Marines fought off the ambush and returned to base, but the presence of a mob of Afghans, when combined with the dead Taliban bodies at the site, allowed the opposition to accuse the Marine unit of excessive force and collateral deaths. Whatever the facts of the matter, these Marines gained a reputation for being trigger-happy, leading President Karzai to demand they be expelled from Afghanistan. Although the accused were ultimately acquitted at a court-martial, the incident had provided

a perfect propaganda opportunity to alienate both Americans and Afghans from the effort against the Taliban.[9]

Similarly, when searching a building, soldiers and marines had learned to minimize their risks by using a "stack," a closely packed file of armed combatants, one behind another, who moved rapidly, weapons pointed in all directions and ready to respond violently to any apparent threat. Even when well-trained troops identified and spared noncombatants, this terrifying intrusion into a private home was likely to alienate those noncombatants permanently. Yet "kicking in doors" in this manner frequently yielded prisoners and intelligence that enabled the coalition to weaken the various opposition groups.

Abu Ghraib

Revelations of Americans torturing and humiliating prisoners further offended and alienated Iraqis. The problem began far away from Baghdad and the military, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. By a hairsplitting interpretation of the Third Geneva Convention, the Bush administration concluded that only qualified prisoners of war—that is, not including "unlawful combatants"—had the right to be protected under the convention. This contradicted US Army intelligence doctrine, which extended Geneva protections to all detainees, although some military personnel began to imitate CIA methodology. In Iraq, Army unit-level interrogations varied in their approach, with some using abusive techniques, but at centralized confinement facilities such as Abu Ghraib, which included personnel influenced by the CIA in Afghanistan, abuses became common, creating a permissive atmosphere where prisoners were commonly abused, threatened, and humiliated in a misguided attempt to gain information.

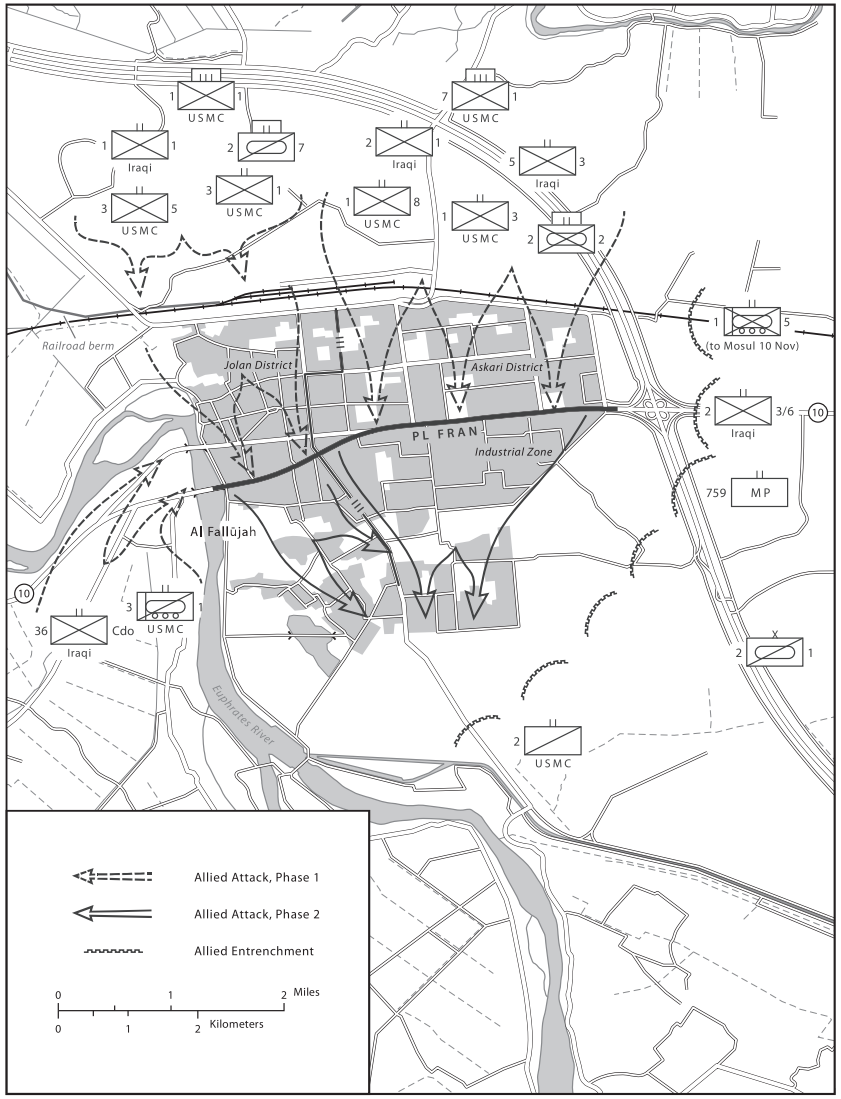
Unfortunately, these harsh interrogation techniques, including so-called water-boarding, were based on the techniques that the military had used for decades to train American personnel to resist enemy torture (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape, or SERE). In turn, that torture was based on Chinese Communist interrogations during the Korean War. Yet, these interrogations were not concerned with obtaining valid intelligence data but rather with extorting false propaganda statements from prisoners. Thus, the harsh techniques were not only of dubious legality and morality but also *known in advance to be ineffective* in extracting valid information. When news of those techniques became public, however, that revelation both discouraged American public support for the war effort and motivated many "foreign fighters" to travel to Iraq to combat the Americans.[10] The Department of Defense finally mandated a return to US Army doctrinal treatment of prisoners, but the damage was done.

Fallujah and After

In April 2004, public perceptions, distorted by both insurgent propaganda and the credulous reporting of the Arab news channel Al Jazeera, had prompted the United States to withdraw from the disputed city of Fallujah, giving Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and local insurgent leaders an appearance of victory. Four months later, these same insurgents captured the nearby garrisons of two Iraqi National Guard battalions, executing their commanders. Thereafter, some of the foreign fighters attempted to implement their own harsh versions of Sharia law on the city's population.

The coalition leadership decided to reimpose control over the city in November 2004 in an operation commonly known as New Dawn (Al-Fajr), the name assigned by the new Iraqi government. In preparation for this operation, that government declared a local state of emergency. To ensure objective information and perceptions about the coming battle, American and Arab journalists were embedded in their corresponding military units. Moreover, the coincidental death of Yasser Arafat on November 11, 2004, distracted Arab media attention from Fallujah. Psyops elements also worked to confuse the radicals about the details of the attack.[11]

In sharp contrast to the first attempt to control the city, this time coalition commanders made every effort to concentrate sufficient forces for the task. Lt. Gen. John Sattler, whose I Marine Expeditionary Force headquarters functioned as a corps-level Multi-National Force–West (MNF-W), shifted and adjusted troop dispositions to allow the concentration of the 1st and 7th Marine regimental combat teams (RCTs)—equivalent to brigades—north of Fallujah. Each of these RCTs was reinforced by the equivalent of a mechanized Army battalion, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry, for RCT 1 and 2nd Squadron, 2nd Cavalry, for RCT 7. Naval construction battalions (fighting as sappers) and two Army artillery battalions also supported the operation. Area security outside Fallujah was conducted by 2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, while the MNF-W reserve, 1st Battalion, 5th Infantry, a Stryker battalion, reinforced the cordon that the coalition imposed around the city. All this was in addition to at least six Iraqi battalions, including the 6th Commando Battalion and a Special Police Commando battalion that were trained in urban operations. To reduce any cultural offense involved, these Iraqi units were assigned to occupy sensitive buildings such as a hospital and to clear houses behind the front lines. Unfortunately for this plan, the Iraqi battalions proved unequal to the challenge, and both RCTs found it necessary to reassign Marine units to expedite the clearing process. The attackers also stockpiled supplies to reduce the effect of any insurgent ambushes in their rear.[12]



Second Battle of Fallujah, September 2004. Map by the official cartographer at the US Army Center of Military History, Washington, DC. It first appeared in Joel D. Rayburn and Frank K. Sobchak (eds.), *The U.S. Army in the Iraq War*, vol. 1 (Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2019) and is reproduced by permission of the US Army War College Press.

Operation al-Fajr began on November 7, when Seabees and close air support breached the railroad berms that formed a barrier around the northern edge of the city. During the operation, the Air Force married its JDAM guidance system to unusually small bombs to flatten individual buildings while limiting collateral damage. Marine attack helicopters also provided close support, although two of these aircraft were hit by ground fire and had to make forced landings on November 11.[13] Pilots reported multiple secondary explosions when they hit buildings, suggesting the accurate engagement of insurgent groups. Once through the railroad barrier and with the seizure of a major hospital, the advance moved steadily southward inside the city. The two Army mechanized units, operating on the flanks of the advance, made such rapid progress that the Marines canceled an intended change of direction and instead continued to grind slowly southward. The coalition security cordon around the city also proved tighter than it had been in April, although al-Zarqawi and another insurgent leader escaped on November 8. Two days later, al-Zarqawi's followers took advantage of the focus on Fallujah to launch a surprise attack against security forces in Mosul, capturing or destroying thirty-five police stations. US infantry worked with Iraqi police to recapture Mosul by the 14th, but the Mosul uprising required the redeployment of 1-5 Infantry from the cordon around Fallujah.[14] Despite this distraction, the combined coalition forces secured Fallujah by November 16, 2004, at a cost of 6 Iraqi and 35 Americans killed plus 3 Americans as nonbattle fatalities and some 275 Americans wounded, with an estimated 1,200 insurgents killed.[15]

Ongoing Terrorism

The Fallujah defeat forced some insurgents undercover temporarily, while continued violence by extremists alienated much of the Iraqi population. Some Sunni members of the former regime realigned themselves with al-Zarqawi. While continuing to bait the Shi'ites by attacking the Husayn Shrine, in 2004–5, al-Zarqawi increasingly allied himself with al-Qaeda although he disagreed with more nationalistic insurgents about tactics. In the spring of 2005, al-Zarqawi conducted a series of car bomb attacks, including 142 in May alone. Most of the suicide bombers were foreigners, especially Saudis and Kuwaitis.[16]

Set piece battles such as Fallujah, where the insurgents chose to stand and fight, were the exception rather than the rule in both theaters of conflict. Far more common were ambushes, suicide bombings, rocket and mortar attacks, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Most of the tactics involved came from the Israeli-Palestinian struggles; bombings often occurred in pairs so that the delayed second explosion maximized noncombatant casualties when people rushed to help the victims of the first explosion.

One of the deadliest forms of improvised explosive device was the explosively formed penetrator (EFP), a concave metal dome buried on top of a large but hidden cache of explosive material. First used against the Israel Defense Forces in 2002, this device, if detonated properly, would propel the metal upward into the underbelly of a military vehicle or sideways into the wall of such a vehicle, penetrating areas that were often poorly armored. A technology race ensued, with the attackers developing better means of concealment and detonation while the coalition sought to jam radio commands or otherwise disrupt the bombs. Eventually, the United States and other Western states developed vehicles to withstand EFPs and other mines, often with a V-shaped undercarriage that would divert the blast toward the sides of the vehicle rather than exploding straight upward into its personnel compartment. Sometimes these solutions anticipated that the blast might roll the entire vehicle over onto its back. Although reasonably effective against IEDs, such vehicles often presented a high-sided profile against more conventional antitank weapons. This new equipment included the American Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) personnel carrier and a series of UK transports known as Cougar and Mastiff, plus up-armoring the standard British FV432 personnel carrier as the Bulldog.[17] By November 2005, almost all US Army HMMWVs in Iraq had received additional armor, but only about one-third of Marine vehicles had been similarly upgraded.[18] Designing, producing, shipping, and maintaining these specialized vehicles added another layer to the expense and staff work required when deploying new units to Iraq and Afghanistan.

Following the February 22, 2006, al-Qaeda attack that destroyed the hallowed Askari Mosque in Samarra, widespread Shi'a demonstrations and violence broke out against Sunnis, including attacks on Sunni mosques. Despite such sectarian strife, the Multi-National Force continued to follow official policy, seeking to improve Iraqi security forces and continue the transfer of responsibility.[19]

On June 7, 2006, the coalition finally located and killed al-Zarqawi, but sectarian murders continued. A month later, open fighting broke out in Baghdad between the two sects, with the Shi'a radicals driving large numbers of the opposing group out of the capital.[20]

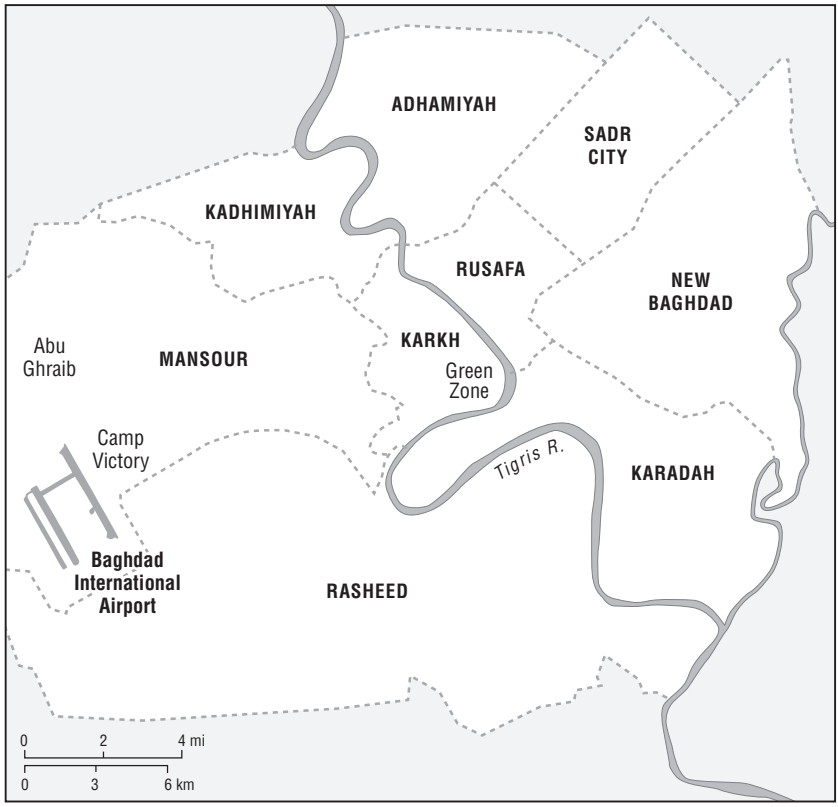
The Surge

Counterinsurgency requires large numbers of security forces to protect the government, population, and infrastructure as well as to seek out the insurgents who conceal themselves among the populace. Force alone cannot create a stable government, but order and security are prerequisites to effective governance. While denying that any fixed number would ensure victory, FM 3-24 suggested

a minimum of 20–25 counterinsurgents per 1,000 residents (2–2.5 percent) to stabilize an insurgency,[21] and other students of the subject have hypothesized even larger numbers. Given the slow growth and unreliable nature of most Iraqi security forces, it was an obvious if politically difficult conclusion that coalition forces, especially in cities, had to be increased, not decreased, to provide security as a prerequisite for effective government. Moreover, the coalition forces needed to move off large installations to actually protect and control the populace. With most available troops tied down in static, defensive roles, only a large influx of maneuver forces would allow the occupier to regain the initiative from the insurgents.

Journalistic accounts of this issue rightly praise the role of retired general John M. (Jack) Keane, supported by then-Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno and others, in convincing the Bush administration to improve Iraqi security by reversing the drawdown of American troops.[22] Even greater credit is due to President Bush himself, who authorized such an open admission of his administration's previous mistakes. As a practical matter, the 2006 midterm elections had telegraphed public dissatisfaction with the conflict, leading to Robert Gates replacing Rumsfeld as defense secretary. Gates had already reversed Rumsfeld's policies by setting aside "transformation" efforts and authorizing a further increase to Army strength of 44,000, but the armed services were hard-pressed to scrape together the five additional brigades that Bush announced in a speech on January 23, 2007. Perhaps emblematic of the policy shift was Gates's decision not to reappoint Gen. Peter Pace for another term as chairman of the Joint Chiefs, apparently because Congress had criticized Pace's loyal public support for the previous conduct of the war.[23]

The Surge meant more than just increased troop strength. General Petraeus, who took command of MNF-I in February 2007, directed the available troops to reestablish combat outposts inside Baghdad where they fought pitched battles with insurgents. Concrete barriers encircled some disputed neighborhoods, restricting insurgent movement among and intimidation of the population. Local residents had little trust in the partisan and often corrupt police, but gradually, some locals established closer relations with coalition troops and provided raw intelligence information. Increased patrols not only protected the population but also forced the insurgents to move and communicate more frequently, multiplying opportunities to track the enemy while disrupting some of their bombing efforts.[24] At the same time, the American commitment to a continued presence gave Iraqi security forces longer time periods to train for future combat. Overall, General Petraeus and the US ambassador, career diplomat Ryan Crocker, cooperated closely both on policy and in their dealings with the Iraqi government.



Baghdad. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

Even before the Surge officially began, American commanders had worked to protect the populace while negotiating 779 truces with various (largely Sunni) entities. Such local deals did not necessarily produce immediate peace, but they at least fragmented opposition groups. In Anbar Province, the western third of Iraq that had long been a hotbed of resistance, 103,000 Sunnis and/or former insurgents joined neighborhood guards and other semiofficial security forces, each man being paid thirty dollars a month and given limited supplies to man checkpoints. These volunteers underwent some background investigation before receiving badges and might lose pay for being absent from or late for duty. Such security measures reduced local violence, brought in floods of raw intelligence information, and constricted the infiltration of Iranian and other Shi'a aid into Iraq, where it had been contributing to disruptions in cities, including the capital.[25] Unfortunately for later stability, the Shi'a-dominated government was consistently hostile toward Sunni groups even when the

Sunnis aided order and security. Moreover, despite coalition efforts to repair utilities, the central government remained disconnected from the tribes and provided little in the way of services to Iraqis outside of Shi'a neighborhoods.

In the summer and fall of 2007, search and clear operations captured several Iranian Quds Force operatives and seized Iranian-supplied bomb-making materials, exposing the lie of Iranian assurances of noninterference to the new Iraqi government. As a gesture of goodwill, the United States released nine Quds Force soldiers to Iran in November, only to recapture five of the same men attempting to reinfiltrate a few days later.[26]

The Turkish government, which refused to distinguish between different groups of armed Kurds, further complicated matters in October–December 2007. Angered by the attacks of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) forces inside Turkey, Ankara launched ground and air attacks on the Kurds of northern Iraq, in the process exceeding the limits it had agreed upon with the United States. Iraqi Kurds demanded that their national government condemn such attacks, threatening to wreck the fragile political balance in Baghdad. Under pressure to resign, Prime Minister al-Maliki's health collapsed in December, while his desire to appear strong complicated Iraqi approval for an annual continuation of the UN Security Council authorization for the coalition presence. At the time, the Surge had not yet visibly improved domestic security, so many Iraqi politicians were hostile to continued coalition operations.[27]

Gradually, the low-level, retail effects of protecting and connecting with the populace gained traction, but the Surge also provided manpower for the series of major search and clearing operations (Phantom) directed by Odierno's Multi-National Corps–Iraq (MNC-I). The principal purpose of Phantom was to drive Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) away from Baghdad while securing other population centers along the Tigris River. The last and perhaps largest of such sweeps, Operation Phantom Strike (February–March 2008), involved four US-led multinational divisions in hotspots from Mosul in the north to Baghdad's southern suburbs. At the same time, Operation Hydra used intelligence, petroleum economists, and other resources to target AQI's funding sources. During Phantom Strike, the coalition lost 60 troops killed and the Iraqi security forces more than 500 killed while the Sunni insurgent groups suffered an estimated 900 killed and 2,500 captured.[28]

One remaining hotspot was Basrah, where the underresourced British contingent had struggled for years against JAM and other militias. By the end of 2007, the British force had shrunk to 4,500 soldiers and was clearly unable to prevail against an opposition that had greater control over Basrah than over cities occupied by American units. Instead, the British largely withdrew from the city center to focus on building Iraqi security elements in the area.[29]

Yet, these local forces were far from ready for battle. coalition commanders found the 10th Iraqi Division staff was so infiltrated with militants that it was useless in contested areas; the division headquarters had to move farther north and be replaced in Basrah by the improvised and understrength 14th Division. Local police and other security troops proved equally unreliable, being controlled by the Supreme Islamic Council for Iraq and other radical groups. The governing provincial council was split into hostile factions, while Prime Minister al-Maliki was at odds with the provincial governor, Mohammed Musbeh al-Waeli, who sought federal autonomy for his region.[30]

Al-Maliki saw the Basrah insurgents as an opportunity for him to demonstrate the government's new capabilities and incidentally score points against rival Shi'a groups. Whereas Petraeus envisioned a gradual buildup of troops and supplies in the area, the prime minister wanted to move immediately, in effect defining the militias and Iranian-backed groups as national enemies. On March 25, 2008, he launched Operation Saulat al-Fursan (Knights' Charge, or Charge of the Knights) to establish government control of the city, ordering the equivalent of two brigades to the area and announcing his intention to control the battle personally.[31] Yet the Sadrists had firm control of the city, and the staffs of the new Iraqi armed forces had no experience with the complexities of deploying and particularly supplying such a major force. General Petraeus and his recently arrived MNC-I commander, Lt. Gen. Lloyd Austin, made the operation their highest priority, providing logistical support, advisers, and a USMC headquarters staff to facilitate the operation. The UK also improvised mentoring teams to assist Iraqi units. Massive air support encouraged the government forces to advance while demoralizing the Sadrists, who were unaccustomed to fighting stand-up engagements. Unmanned aerial vehicles followed Sadrist supply movements to identify centers of resistance that were then struck by Hellfire missiles. The United States also provided a Civil-Military Operations Center, following behind the troop advance in Basrah to fund cleanup operations and facilitate the detention of local criminals. Iraqi special operations forces conducted raids to eliminate militia commanders.

Unlike their brethren in Baghdad, the radicals of Basrah were unaccustomed to the bitter fighting that ensued. After a struggle, government security forces gained control of the city, a severe setback for JAM and the Sadrists. Yet the degree to which the city had dissolved into chaos seriously damaged mutual trust between American and British commanders.[32]

Parallel to Operation Knights' Charge, a similar confrontation occurred in the eastern Baghdad area known as Sadr City, where at al-Maliki's insistence the coalition had left the radical militia in charge. Sadrists misrepresented special operations raids into this area as excessively violent, but rocket and

mortar fire and kidnappings by insurgents based in Sadr City, often targeting the international (Green) zone of Baghdad, made the government appear weak. At the same time, al-Sadr struggled with factions both within JAM and among other, Iranian-backed groups, making him also appear vulnerable. Al-Maliki finally authorized action in Sadr City on the same date, March 25, that he had ordered the securing of Basrah. The 11th Iraqi Division and 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, moved into the area, with the latter seeking to control the sites used to launch rockets against the central Green Zone. The attackers quickly regained checkpoints previously seized by the Sadrists and began constructing large concrete barriers to secure Route Gold, a supply route in the disputed area, to hamper JAM rocket attacks.[33]

Just as in Basrah, the Sadr City struggle frayed the government's security forces. Accustomed to operating checkpoints, some of these troops were unprepared mentally for urban combat, while some seven hundred, many of whom had families living in eastern Baghdad, deserted. Yet both Petraeus and al-Maliki saw this struggle as an opportunity to break al-Sadr's power, a struggle aided by the April 11 assassination of the Shi'a leader's brother-in-law and subordinate. Trying to maintain control, the Sadrists made vain efforts to slow the construction of the concrete walls, offering themselves as targets for precision airpower as well as the American M1s and M2s. US Navy SEAL snipers picked off sixty-seven insurgents trying to move during sandstorms, and both US and Iraqi special operators made helicopter raids against JAM leaders. On May 10, al-Sadr agreed to a ceasefire including no public carrying or display of weapons; two Iraqi brigades then occupied parts of Sadr City. The Sadr City struggle did not put an end to the Sadrists, but the elimination of their safe haven made it more difficult for them to conduct bombings and other attacks.[34]

Some accounts have made much of the disagreement between General Petraeus and Adm. William "Fox" Fallon, whom the Bush administration selected to head Central Command in early 2007. Fallon had a distinguished career as an aviator, culminating as vice chief of naval operations and head of Pacific Command. His CENTCOM appointment was apparently due to his reputation as an independent thinker, and in theory such a person could provide a useful check on Persian Gulf policy. However, Fallon regularly delayed MNC-I requests for additional troops although he had much less familiarity with Iraq than did Petraeus, Odierno, and other Army veterans of the war. In 2008, the admiral gave a magazine interview that portrayed him as disagreeing with the administration concerning Iran policy, and this perception led to his early retirement. General Petraeus, who had sought a European command, instead succeeded Fallon at CENTCOM with General Odierno becoming his successor in Iraq.[35]

Post-Surge Iraq

In mid-2008, the last of five additional Surge brigades departed Iraq, having reduced violence and disorder to the point where the government controlled Baghdad, Basrah, and Mosul. Thomas Ricks was probably correct to assert that the Surge was "the least wrong move in a misconceived war."[36] It could not fix the Bush administration's original decision to invade Iraq with a limited force, but it provided sufficient stability as well as a supportive environment for the maturation of Iraq's own security forces and government.

In an October 2007 message, the reclusive Osama bin Laden had in effect admitted this coalition success, acknowledging various tactical errors of AQI and condemning Iraqi Sunnis for cooperating with the Americans.[37] While the operations conducted during the Surge had significantly weakened both Shi'a and Sunni insurgents, those groups continued to conduct bombing and other terror attacks for several years. After years in-country, however, American civilian and military intelligence personnel had acquired considerable knowledge and experience in dealing with these threats. The DIA assisted the military in pushing additional analysts to brigade level and below. There they capitalized on residents' renewed trust in the occupiers to generate considerable tactical information, information that enabled both special operations and conventional forces to consistently raid and disorganize the opposition.[38] On April 18, 2010, a combined raid by Iraqi and US special operations troops southwest of Tikrit killed the two highest surviving leaders of AQI and captured large amounts of data that facilitated further attacks on the weakened Sunni insurgents.[39]

It would be misleading to assert that Iraq was pacified, but the sacrifices of coalition and Iraqi forces did provide a measure of order that enabled the government to develop. Having largely withdrawn from the cities in 2009, the United States redesignated its mission as Operation New Dawn and increasingly provided troops organized to advise and assist the Iraqi security forces rather than fight on their own.

Yet, the course of "nation building" was by no means easy or peaceful. Having to balance both Kurdish and radical Shi'a interests, al-Maliki retained control of the government only with great difficulty, using questionable political maneuvering and sometimes military force against his opponents. More generally, the ongoing violence poisoned everyone's political views. While the coalition was by no means blameless, much if not most of the destruction and suffering since 2003 was inflicted by Iranian agents, Sunni foreign fighters, and local radicals of various confessional militias. Still, it was human nature for the Iraqi population and especially Iraqi politicians to attribute the entire toll of noncombatant casualties during the insurgency to the occupiers and

demand return of full sovereignty to their government. Sadrists redoubled attacks on Americans during 2011 so that they could claim falsely to have forced the United States out.[40]

This desire for full sovereignty conflicted with the real need to retain a residual US force in Iraq, especially to control Iranian interference that included Hezbollah attacks on American troops. Politically, however, the prime minister knew that Iraqi legislators would never approve a long-term status of forces agreement (SOFA), the normal arrangement that permitted the United States to try its own soldiers accused of crimes rather than turn them over to the host government. A month before he left office, President Bush had agreed with al-Maliki on a SOFA that required all American combat forces to be out of Iraqi cities by the end of June 2009 and out of the country at the end of 2011.[41] Therefore, any continuing American force would require the legal protections of a new SOFA. When the issue was not resolved by August 2011, President Barack Obama directed that the final withdrawal of American forces begin without leaving a residual force in-country. Special Forces screened the withdrawal, ready to ward off possible ambushes. To preempt possible ambushes at the last minute, the final convoys left the country on December 18, 2011, well prior to the announced end-of-year deadline.[42] For a brief period, the new Iraqi state was on its own, but continued sectarian discrimination paved the way for future Sunni radicalism.

Afghan Encore

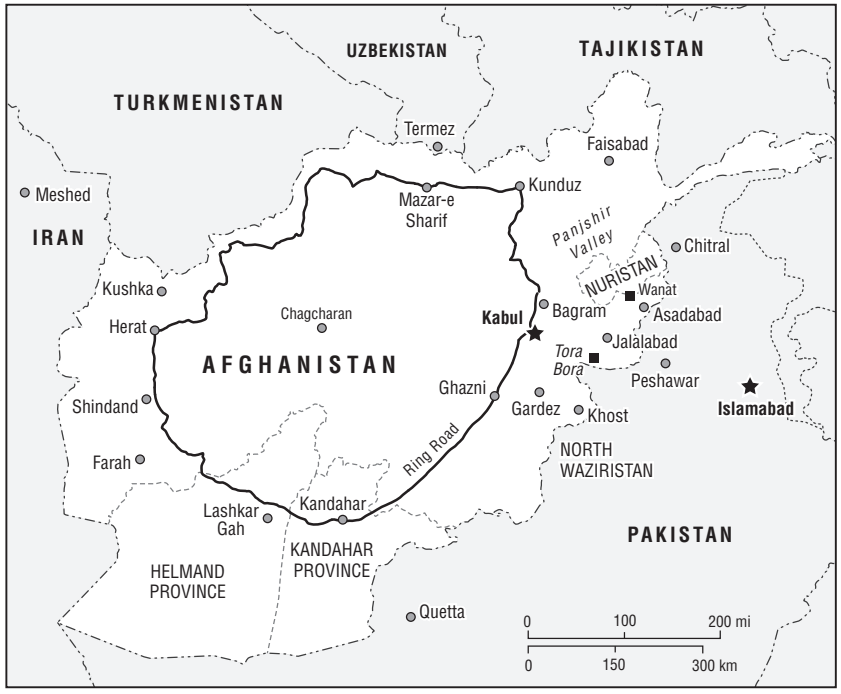
Long before the Surge took effect in Iraq, the situation there had absorbed both available troops and presidential attention, leaving the future of Afghanistan unresolved. The Taliban had regrouped across the border in Pakistan, adjusted their propaganda message, and by 2006 were reinfiltrating large parts of the country to launch an insurgency. Instead of the sectarian disputes of Iraq, Afghanistan suffered from long-standing tribal and linguistic divisions, but the results were the same: significant portions of the population supported insurgency against the Western-established government. Thus, while the West viewed the Taliban as another group of Islamist radicals, the Afghan opposition also included an expression of nationalism by the ethnic Pashtuns who straddled the arbitrary Durand Line, the 1919 border with Pakistan.[43] (To further complicate loyalties, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) posed their own long-term threat to Islamabad.) Nor were the Afghan Taliban a ragtag paramilitary; over time, they mastered the integration of mortar fire with mines, booby traps, and infantry.[44]

Whatever Prime Minister al-Maliki's weaknesses and misjudgments in Iraq, his counterpart Karzai was even more insecure and reluctant, for political

reasons, to support American use of force. In counterbalancing the warlords, Karzai operated more like a tribal elder than a head of state. Despite the presence of Western advisory teams, the Karzai government remained inexperienced and had little influence over much of the population.[45]

In April 2003, the North Atlantic Council had decided to assume the lead in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and five months later the NAC directed its military command to consider options for expanding ISAF outside of the Afghan capital. For many NATO members, this was another attempt, after the relative failure of Yugoslavia, to make the alliance relevant in the post-Soviet environment. Over time, NATO members provided increasing numbers of troops to man ISAF, both because they feared terrorism and because NATO was seeking a new definition for the alliance as a liberal action agency in the post–Cold War era.[46] Unfortunately for Afghan security, however, political concerns about NATO casualties meant that many ISAF troops were even more limited by "national caveats" than they had been in Somalia and Iraq.[47] German troops, for example, were assigned to train police (although the nature of policing was very different in Afghanistan than in Germany) and were restricted to their bases during the hours of darkness. German Air Force Tornado fighter-bombers could only be used in specified emergencies. The soldiers and airmen of these NATO contingents were undoubtedly well trained and motivated, but they had to follow instructions from their parent governments. Some national contingents, in fact, may have negotiated local truces with the opposition.

One example of the resulting shortages in effective forces may illustrate the resulting problem: the Nuristan Province of northeastern Afghanistan. The mixed population of Nuristanis and Pashtuns totaled some 525,000 people in 2008, but only 1,400 US troops (Task Force Rock, built around 2nd Battalion, 503rd Infantry, plus some four hundred Marines and other troops as trainers) and perhaps twice as many Afghan security forces were available to control the area. Most of these troops were scattered out in 120 platoon- or company-sized combat outposts (COPs), from which they tried vainly to provide security to the local populace. In July 2008, one platoon each of paratroopers and Afghan security forces quickly constructed a COP on a hill overlooking the village of Wanat; they had redeployed there in part because of suspicious incidents suggesting that the Afghan security leaders at another location were compromised. Early on the morning of July 13, 2008, Taliban fighters launched a surprise attack on the COP. The Afghan security troops apparently contributed little to the defense of the post, which suggested possible collusion or at least neutrality with regard to the Taliban. Artillery and attack helicopters helped the American defenders drive off the attackers, but in only two hours



Afghanistan: Counterinsurgency. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

the American defenders suffered nine killed and twenty-seven wounded (of which sixteen had to be evacuated) while the Afghans sustained an additional five wounded. Such concentrated casualties were rare at the time, but only the tenacity and skills of the Wanat defenders prevented total defeat. After the fact, a search of the town suggested that the Taliban had completely infiltrated and dominated the locals.[48]

A related issue was the absence of unity of effort in the country. The ISAF/coalition commander changed every eight to eighteen months, and strategy and priorities often changed with him. In 2006–7, Gen. David Richards, the innovative British officer who had restored order in Sierra Leone (see chapter 9), chafed at having not only inadequate military forces but also little input concerning political policy or control over the US security force trainers and special operations forces. He experienced considerable friction with both Secretary Rumsfeld and then-Maj. Gen. Benjamin Freakley, the commander of US forces in Operation Enduring Freedom (by mutual consent with its allies, the United States maintained OEF as a separate counterterrorism mission). On his own initiative, Richards undertook negotiations with Pakistan's dictator,

Pervez Musharraf, to seek agreement on the Taliban operating out of Pakistan, but President Karzai was understandably suspicious of Pakistani intentions. US general Dan McNeill, ISAF commander from February 2007 to June 2008, had a completely different focus: he sought to pressure NATO contingents to go "outside the [defensive] wire" and defeat the Taliban militarily. Both men and their successors were experienced soldiers with valid arguments, but the absence of continuity weakened the overall counterinsurgency efforts.[49] This turmoil at the top continued when Defense Secretary Gates persuaded President Obama to replace Gen. David McKiernan, ISAF/US commander from October 2008 to June 2009.[50]

If the coalition forces were lacking in numbers and coherent strategy, the Afghan Security Forces were often ineffectual. As of mid-2008, no Afghan National Army (ANA) unit was rated as fully capable by coalition advisers. Afghan police, in particular, were illiterate and deprived of pay and support by their higher commanders, which prompted them to prey on the population they were supposed to protect. Training these men for the dual roles of maintaining law and order while fighting insurgents proved nearly impossible. The ANA was equally riddled by what, to Western as well as Afghan eyes, appeared to be rampant corruption; just as under the Soviets, often-unpaid Afghan soldiers were likely to sell their equipment and weapons to the enemy and then expect to be resupplied. ISAF often provided logistical support for the Afghans, while Western concepts such as equipment maintenance and precision marksmanship were very difficult to impart.[51] More generally, large sums of American government and NGO aid encouraged corruption in all construction projects, and from there much of the money ended up financing warlords and the Taliban.

Even with American general Stanley McChrystal heading ISAF and coordinating closely with the Afghan government (June 2009–June 2010), there were too many independent actors loose in Afghanistan. Secrecy is essential to ensure surprise for special operations, but that secrecy can lead to failures in coordination with unintended consequences. In Afghanistan, Task Force–714 managed US Army Special Forces primarily to gather intelligence, but the CIA also had extensive black operations, often involving contractors as well as local militia working for the Afghan National Directorate of Security. These well-meaning but secretive efforts at counterterrorism frequently led to civilian casualties that offended both the populace and the Karzai government.[52]

While Iran was intimately involved in Iraqi Shi'a insurgencies, Pakistan turned a blind eye to—or actively abetted—what its own frontier provinces, as well as the Taliban in exile, did along the border. A strong, pro-Delhi government in Kabul would be contrary to Islamabad's desire to use that country as

a source for operatives to use against India. In September 2006, the Islamabad government formally agreed to relinquish control of North Waziristan to Taliban-linked tribes in the area.[53] When American tactical commanders attempted to coordinate with their Pakistani counterparts, information about US movements or planned UAV operations in the border area often leaked, leading to Taliban ambushes and countermeasures. On several occasions when Taliban and Western forces clashed near the disputed border, Pakistani border guards fired in support of the insurgents, apparently believing or at least claiming that ISAF was shooting at the border guards. Eventually, President Bush concluded that Pakistan was so duplicitous that he had to intensify cross-border UAV operations to strike at al-Qaeda and Taliban in their Pakistani sanctuary.[54] A series of ISAF commanders attempted to establish working relations with Pakistan's Gen. Ashfaq Kayani, head of Inter-Services Intelligence (2004–7) and then chief of the army staff (2007–13). Still, border friction continued, especially after the US intrusion into Pakistan on May 2, 2011, to kill Osama bin Laden. For years, Pakistani officials had concealed the al-Qaeda leader despite Washington's known desire to locate him, but the SEAL raid into their territory offended Pakistani sensibilities. Soon after this incident, Pakistani troops began deliberately targeting US special operators in the disputed border region, prompting massive air strikes against Pakistanis that led to months of suspended diplomatic relations.[55]

The Surge That Wasn't

This study, and especially this chapter, has stressed the recurring reluctance of the Bush administration to commit sufficient troops to create the stability that was a necessary precondition for so-called nation building. With the sole exception of the Iraqi Surge, the civilian government in Washington consistently starved the field commanders of the troops necessary to quickly train local forces, secure key locations, and pursue the insurgent enemy. As Sten Rynning has observed, when the counterinsurgency force is too small to do all this, "limited force numbers push you to become more kinetic," replacing manpower with firepower that may kill and alienate the local populace.[56]

Committing soldiers to combat, especially the prolonged combat necessary for counterinsurgency, is a politically sensitive issue in the United States, as observed repeatedly in this study. Yet, the failure to provide sufficient forces *early* in the struggle contradicted the hard-earned lessons of the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine that Powell and Cheney had supported in 1990;[57] this failure undoubtedly prolonged the two insurgencies into which the United States had blundered after 9/11. Like purchasing something on a high-interest credit card, this was a clear case of "pay me now or pay me more later," with two

poorly defined conflicts stretching out for decades because civilian administrations were reluctant to incur the political costs of deploying overwhelming force at the start of the conflict. As so often before in the history of limited warfare, initiating a war proved far easier than successfully terminating that war, especially under the prolonged attritional demands of population-centric counterinsurgency.

A facile solution to the manpower shortage was to get other nations to help with the fight, persuading allies to provide more soldiers while recruiting and training local security forces. Yet American allies, while valorous in action, were equally subject to domestic political restrictions, and local forces, as we have seen, had their own problems of motivation and political reliability. In April 2009, NATO, which had already provided fifty-nine leadership-heavy mentoring and liaison teams for the ANA's battalions, committed an additional 2,000 soldiers to this training mission.[58] Increasing the number of Western advisers in a complex civil war also increased the opportunity for betrayal. Afghanistan witnessed numerous instances of "green on blue" casualties in which the national security forces deliberately fired upon their coalition "partners," in many cases because the local troops perceived the foreigners as insulting their culture or religion.[59]

Political reluctance to authorize sufficient forces was by no means a new issue of the twenty-first century. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and President Lyndon Johnson had been equally loath to deploy troops to Vietnam in a timely manner, instead building up the US forces in such an incremental, halting manner that their North Vietnamese counterparts were able to offset the increases. After the initial deployments, military commanders had learned to request only the additional units that had been formed at home, avoiding any question of mobilization for the war effort. Meanwhile, those same commanders supported Johnson's beliefs and were publicly optimistic about the war for fear of demoralizing both South Vietnamese and Americans. H. R. McMaster, a career Army officer and future national security advisor, had documented the miscommunications between generals and politicians, including the debates on troop strength, in a classic study whose title summed up the issue: *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam*.[60]

Yet, outside of history classrooms and a few military schools, none of this was apparent to the American public, let alone to their political leaders. Even the knowledgeable journalist Bob Woodward wrote that "the military had virtually dictated the force levels" in Vietnam.[61] In Afghanistan during successive American administrations, all that had been visible to most Americans was a series of senior leaders testifying to Congress about the need for more troops to

spend longer time periods in Iraq and Afghanistan. This gave the impression that military leaders always got what they asked for—when in fact most ISAF commanders felt chronically underresourced—without any apparent resolution of the conflict. In reality, the military may well have been guilty of the same errors in Afghanistan that had crippled the US efforts in Vietnam, settling for the limited number of troops they knew were available to deploy while giving the impression that those troops would be sufficient to achieve success.

This was the background to a civil-military misunderstanding that had serious consequences for Afghanistan. In mid-2008, General McKiernan had requested an additional 30,000 US troops for the Afghan theater; President Bush—who had no desire to deal with yet another unpopular troop deployment—had delayed and then suggested, and the Obama transition team had agreed, that this decision should be deferred to the new administration. Although all concerned must have been aware that the Afghanistan garrison had been shortchanged for years in favor of Iraq, there was apparently no thought that such an additional delay would give the opposition more opportunity to grow in strength. Indeed, Mr. Obama reports himself as asking JCS chairman Adm. Michael Mullen, "After almost five years where we managed with twenty thousand or fewer troops . . . it's the Pentagon's assessment that we can't wait another two months before deciding to *double* our troop commitment?"[62] Such a question overlooked the accumulated consequences of the United States having "managed" for seven years with insufficient troops. In February 2009, after this discussion with Admiral Mullen and Central Command's Petraeus, Vice President Biden's immediate reaction to the belated consideration of reinforcements was to warn Mr. Obama, "One thing I know is when these generals are trying to box in a new president."[63] Neither the president nor the vice president appeared to acknowledge that the real culprit was the previous administration's consistent efforts to stabilize Afghanistan with insufficient resources, even though President Obama said he was tired of being told that.[64] The prolonged lack of maneuver forces created a situation in which the insurgents were able to implant themselves deeply inside the populace, making their defeat more expensive in blood and treasure. Only a significant increase in such forces would enable the coalition to seize the initiative, so by 2009 it was past time to choose between a major resource investment and an early withdrawal.

In February 2009, under pressure from a skeptical new administration and its National Security Council staff, the Defense Department's Joint Staff abruptly revised its estimate of the immediate troop requirement from 30,000 down to 17,000, the supposed minimum to secure the Afghan presidential election in August. In part, this reduction was probably based on the practical consideration that it would take months to generate additional forces anyway,

the same pragmatic justification used to limit troop requests during Vietnam. Small wonder that the Obama administration, looking for exact numbers amidst the imponderables of war, concluded that military requests were thinly justified if at all. Lost in that exchange was the need for further troops later, in large measure to make up for years of undermanning.[65]

In fairness to Obama, one should also recall that this new president was dealing with a banking crisis, a looming recession, and an effort to broaden health care while he waited for his national security staff to conduct a long-overdue review of Afghan policy. That review concluded that the American objective was to disrupt and defeat al-Qaeda; that was indeed the fundamental national interest, but the implied tasks to reach that goal ranged from defeating the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan to building a democratic government in Afghanistan to providing equal treatment for women there; such a democratic government appeared essential to keep al-Qaeda and the Taliban out. In February 2009, President Obama authorized an additional 17,000 combat troops plus 4,000 more trainers for Afghanistan.[66] By the time the last of those soldiers had reached their destinations, however, almost a year of Taliban expansion had elapsed since the original request for additional forces.

Defense Secretary Gates had also persuaded the new president to change commanders, bringing in the unconventional (in many senses) commander Stanley McChrystal. Obama asked his new general to do a strategic reassessment of the entire situation, while making it clear that he was unwilling to invest large amounts of resources over long periods of time. Yet, when General McChrystal arrived at his new job, he concluded that even a fully resourced counterinsurgency effort had at best a fifty-fifty probability of success.[67] Seven years of procrastination and lack of troops had made a challenging problem much more difficult than it might have been in 2002. On August 30, 2009, McChrystal submitted an overall assessment that read in part:

> We must conduct classic counter-insurgency operations in an environment that is uniquely complex. . . . Success demands a comprehensive counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign. . . .
>
> Our objective must be the population. . . . Gaining their support will require a better understanding of the people's choices and needs. However, progress is hindered by the dual threat of a resilient insurgency and a crisis of confidence in the [Afghan] government and the international coalition. To win their support, we must protect the people from both of these threats. . . .
>
> Our campaign in Afghanistan has been historically under-resourced and remains so today. . . . Resources [alone] will not win this war, but under-resourcing could lose it. . . . The new strategy . . . also required additional resources. Broadly speaking, we require more civilian and military resources, more ANSF [Afghan

> National Security Forces], and more ISR [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance] and other enablers.[68]

The assessment came with a request for 40,000 additional troops, which would raise the American total in Afghanistan to 100,000. Obama later recalled feeling that the military had subjected him to a "bait and switch" after his recent approval of 17,000 more soldiers, apparently overlooking the long delay and reduction of numbers that had preceded that approval.[69] Worse still, someone leaked the report to journalists, including Bob Woodward; the president was justifiably angry when Admiral Mullen testified to Congress and General Petraeus gave an interview in effect endorsing McChrystal's request before the White House had time to consider the matter.[70]

Instead, between September and November 2009, the president conducted a series of meetings exploring the Afghan problem, and such a review was unquestionably long overdue. He later expressed frustration that his military subordinates kept trying to win a conflict that in his judgment was not an existential threat to the United States; he was looking for reasonable exit strategies, not prolonged warfare, but the only options really amounted to a major increase in troops, continued underresourcing (which cost blood and treasure with little probability of success), or rapid withdrawal. Instead, he tended toward what Vice President Biden termed "CT [counterterrorism] Plus"—using special operations forces and UAVs to pursue any al-Qaeda (and later Islamic State) elements in Afghanistan while seeking to make the Afghan government less corrupt and more legitimate.[71] That appeared to be a reasonable conclusion, but it came only after seven years of accumulated, well-intentioned mistakes, and the decision to limit America's objectives represented a key step in the process whereby, as Mao had predicted, the insurgent simply outlasted his opponent. On November 29, the president presented his advisers with a detailed, explicit set of restrictions and instructions that his subordinates all agreed to support publicly.[72]

Far more significant was the response to General McChrystal's specific resource requests. Domestic political considerations as well as his own determination not to make open-ended commitments prompted the president to make a public decision that unintentionally handed success to the Taliban. In a speech to the Corps of Cadets at West Point on December 1, 2009, Obama announced an additional 30,000 US troops for Afghanistan, but starkly limited the time frame of this second surge to eighteen months, ending in mid-2011. Privately, he had authorized Secretary Gates to deploy an additional 3,000 in exceptional circumstances. Beyond that eighteen-month period, he said, the United States would begin transferring *out* of Afghanistan while continuing to

advise and assist the Afghans who would "ultimately be responsible for their own country." In the interim, he sought to eliminate corruption and increase governmental efficiency in Kabul while continuing to support Pakistani security.[73] In effect, Obama had accepted the smaller numbers proposed by JCS vice chairman Gen. James E. Cartwright, and the resulting plan focused not on nationwide counterinsurgency—which he explicitly rejected—but rather on the goals of building the Afghan government and security forces in the expectation that they would fight that counterinsurgency on their own.[74]

The drawback to this public announcement was that, as Senator Lindsey Graham observed at the time, not only the American people but "the enemy is listening too."[75] In effect, the West Point speech told the Taliban to sit back in their Pakistani sanctuary and wait until the limited Afghan troop increase was over and Kabul's allies began to withdraw.[76] Just as Hanoi had patiently waited while President Nixon publicly drew down US forces in South Vietnam, now the Taliban could wait out its principal opponent. The Taliban had already followed a similar approach at the operational level in 2008, when they apparently recognized that the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit, deployed to Helmand Province to support the British, would only remain for a few months.[77]

The Long Drawdown

Meanwhile, the military increase was accompanied by a flood of both civilian experts (1,000 additional civilians in 2010 alone) and financial assistance. Apart from international and NGO assistance, the Department of Defense spent $19 billion, almost equal to the total gross domestic product of Afghanistan, on the conflict in 2012. The country was unable to absorb such an influx, and some of the funds were diverted to pay protection money to the insurgents, while more projects inevitably went to secure areas rather than war-torn areas that most needed such aid.[78]

American attempts to reduce corruption and waste had to swim against this tide of currency. In June 2010, a US-backed Afghan investigation raided an exchange dedicated to laundering money. The following month, an official of the Kabul Bank, which the government used for its security force payroll, brought proof to US officials that the bank was about to collapse because of shady "loans" to influential officials, but President Karzai resisted efforts to audit the bank. Ambassador Ryan Crocker, General Petraeus, and others in the Obama administration reduced pressure for reform because they needed Karzai's support for other policies; in 2011 the bank collapsed.[79]

The US government had tolerated governmental corruption for a decade, while Karzai had ruled in the traditional manner of his society (and many others), distributing patronage to buy the support of warlords and other

influential elements. When Vice President Biden pressured him on corruption (including accusations against Karzai's brother, who had worked with the CIA), the Afghan leader regarded such criticism as foreign interference and a betrayal of his relationship with the United States. Karzai turned to blatant ballot-stuffing, which he publicly blamed on corruption, leading to his (purported) reelection to another five-year term in 2009.[80]

General McChrystal acknowledged the validity of Karzai's frequent complaints concerning civilian casualties from allied bombing and placed limits on air support. He also tried to position Karzai as a genuine popular leader, urging him to travel widely and connect with the populace. In an astonishing reversal for a special operations leader, McChrystal recognized that the secrecy associated with such operations left the conventional commanders to face public criticism for night raids about which they knew nothing, not to mention the possibility of inadvertent interference with each other. At the grass roots, however, popular support was still difficult to obtain. Clearing a province of insurgents had little effect if the government lacked competent administrators and well-paid national police to operate in that province thereafter. Skillful Taliban propaganda misrepresented foreign actions in a manner that encouraged public dissatisfaction.[81]

Whatever opportunity might have existed for McChrystal's version of population-centric COIN (while obeying Obama's determination to turn the war over to the Afghans) evaporated on June 10, 2010, when *Rolling Stone* magazine published an incendiary article about the ISAF commander.[82] Although the article was a generally positive discussion of the issues, the author mixed in various quotations from McChrystal and his staff officers, quotations that were disrespectful and openly critical of the US government (the article's subtitle referred to "wimps in the White House") and its NATO allies. While the staff officers were understandably frustrated by Washington's lack of support, such criticism of civilian leaders was inexcusable at any time, let alone in front of a reporter. The result was a firestorm of public outrage that led ultimately to McChrystal's retirement and his replacement by his erstwhile supervisor, General Petraeus, who agreed to serve in Kabul for only eighteen months. Meanwhile, 2010 proved to be the bloodiest year for US forces in Afghanistan with 496 killed in action.[83]

Some observers have deplored what they consider the arrogance of Iraq veterans attempting to apply their experiences simplistically to Afghanistan; in fact, between 2005 and 2016 the commanders in Kabul were all veterans of Iraq. While that criticism may have been true of some soldiers, anyone who has ever met David Petraeus will be aware of his combination of humility and superior intellect.[84] He had repeatedly used a PowerPoint slide that stressed,

"Afghanistan does not equal Iraq."[85] As head of Central Command for the preceding two years, he had been fully involved in policy discussions about the troubled mountain country and must have been aware of the president's intent. In fact, he carefully followed White House guidance by emphasizing counterterrorism and reversing McChrystal's restrictions on air and night attacks. Petraeus recognized the need for additional time both to control the country and to improve its government, but Obama's understandable desire to put limits on American involvement militated against any changes in the announced schedule. To further complicate matters, President Karzai, still distressed by civilian casualties, called publicly for a reduction in NATO forces just before the alliance was scheduled to discuss increased troop contributions from other members at its 2010 Lisbon meeting. This eliminated whatever faint chance remained of getting additional boots on the ground. Thereafter, Petraeus was understandably unwilling to cooperate with the Karzai government, and a mutual lack of understanding prevailed. The new commander appointed then-Brig. Gen. H. R. McMaster to head a transparency task force on corruption, another action certain to antagonize Karzai.[86]

In December 2010, ISAF strength peaked at 131,000 troops from forty-eight NATO and non-NATO countries. This figure included 90,000 Americans, while there were another 16,000 involved in US-only operations.[87]

This strength was ephemeral, however, as the clock ran out on the Afghan surge in mid-2011. At about that same time, the fragile governing coalition in Canada decided to terminate its combat mission, bringing 3,000 troops home after suffering at least 159 killed and several thousand wounded.[88] A year later, President Obama informed Petraeus he would withdraw an additional 23,000 in July 2011 plus 10,000 more in June 2012. In the midst of this process, General Petraeus's own self-imposed limit on his time in command expired, so he retired in 2011, to be replaced by marine general John R. Allen. Yet the conflict continued. Seventy Americans died during Allen's first month in command, including thirty-eight in a single helicopter crash. Allen, along with Ambassador Crocker, patiently tried to negotiate with Karzai while attempting to get the Afghans ready to lead in military operations.[89] Some Afghan units, especially special operations forces, did become more effective, but Western observers believed that the formation of such large SOF units was dependent on draining the best Afghan soldiers from conventional units, a common problem for oversized elite forces. By one estimate, the Afghan security forces lost more than 70,000 killed, including many of their best warriors, after 2015.[90]

In May 2012, President Obama signed a partnership agreement with the Karzai government. Karzai, wishing to use this agreement to bolster his legitimacy, refused to come to Washington for the signing ceremony. The signing

was relocated to the Afghan capital, yet Obama's security in Kabul was also at risk, so the actual ceremony was conducted hastily, at midnight, after which the presidential visitor left immediately.[91] Apparently Karzai, like many other Afghan leaders, did not really believe that the United States would ultimately withdraw and thus felt no motivation to work with Washington.

After considerable disagreement because Karzai wanted a formal alliance against Pakistan, in September 2014 NATO and the Afghan government arrived at a SOFA concerning the period after ISAF came to an end.[92] The agreement only came about because the Western-educated Ashraf Ghani had just succeeded Karzai as president. Ghani's government had even greater difficulty operating because the cabinet contained his defeated opponent in the recent election. Ghani's desire to create a centralized government also ran contrary to the numerous cultural, linguistic, and other divisions within the Afghan state.[93] He did, however, give some power to the judiciary and provincial councils. Although Afghanistan made some limited progress in effective government and security forces, it was far from capable of standing on its own against the Taliban menace.

Exit, Negotiating

On December 28, 2014, President Obama announced the official end of American combat operations in Afghanistan; that same day, ISAF furled its colors, to be replaced by a NATO training and support operation labeled Resolute Support.[94] Many members of the coalition had already departed while others were packing up; 33,500 American service members remained (including 9,800, primarily for counterterrorism operations, who were outside coalition control) plus 18,500 from other nations. The Afghan security forces nominally numbered 350,000, although there were still many so-called ghost soldiers who existed only for their pay, with police in particularly short supply.[95] US air strikes also declined sharply as the Afghans formally assumed the primary role in their own defense. In October 2015, Obama concluded that he could not bring a total end to the American presence there, while the high attrition rates among Afghan security forces apparently prompted him to decide that at least 5,500 soldiers would remain when he left office. Nine months later (July 2016), the Afghan forces and government were under such heavy pressure that President Obama paused the drawdown of American forces at about 8,400 soldiers.[96] This level was sufficient to provide a few trainers and advisers to the Afghan security forces while securing the airport outside Kabul, from which UAVs continued to operate over Afghanistan and Pakistan. Beyond that, like the Bush administration, the sitting president deferred future troop reductions to his successor.[97]

The United States made various attempts to negotiate with the Taliban on the basis that the once-and-future governors of Afghanistan must not offer shelter to al-Qaeda and other Islamist terrorists. The Kabul and Taliban governments refused to deal with each other. Meanwhile, such negotiations only encouraged the opposition to believe that foreign troops were soon to withdraw; prolonged efforts to free deserter Sgt. Beaudry Bergdahl also reinforced the image of Washington being obliged to talk to those it considered terrorists.[98] Nor was Pakistan interested in a compromise peace; in January 2010, Islamabad made a rare assertion of sovereignty over its own frontier areas by arresting Mullah Omar's deputy, Omar Ghali Baradar, to interfere with Taliban negotiations.[99] During his final years in office, President Obama continued to draw down the number of trainers and advisers, balancing withdrawal with support to the Kabul government.[100]

Given his ignorance of national security affairs, it was inevitable that President Donald Trump would begin his term in office by trying to distance himself from Obama's policies. He made various limited efforts to win the stalemated Afghan conflict, including increasing the American troop contingent to 15,000 (plus additional civilian contractors), authorizing a significant increase in air and UAV strikes, and pressuring Pakistan into rescuing and releasing some American hostages by threatening another SEAL raid inside that country. Just as with his two predecessors, the new president confused troop ceilings and air strikes with an articulated strategy for the war. When those gestures failed to produce any effect, however, Trump's national security advisor, Lieutenant General McMaster, finally won out over "White House Chief Strategist" Steve Bannon, and in August 2017, the president issued a qualified commitment to support the Kabul government. Yet Trump remained skeptical; he had apparently concluded that no military victory was possible and thought McMaster was manipulating him. In late 2018, the president reversed himself and ordered a major drawdown of American troops to 7,000. More so, perhaps, than either of his predecessors, this president believed that his partisan supporters—who thought of themselves as having contributed more than their share to the war—would settle for nothing less than total evacuation. Just as in his ineffectual dealings with North Korea, the new president conceded a long-standing demand of the opposition—bypassing the local (Afghan) government the United States had worked to build while unilaterally negotiating with their opponents—while receiving no concessions in return. Although Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad did not conclude his negotiations with the Taliban until just after the president left office, during the Trump term the Taliban were willing to reduce attacks on US forces in return for the Americans abandoning their allies in the near future. The only American proviso appeared to be, as before,

that the Taliban must not shelter Islamist terrorists once they regained power.[101] (After failing to attain reelection in November 2020, the president ordered complete withdrawal from Afghanistan, but the order was so unrealistically abrupt that it could not be implemented.)[102]

Khalilzad's diplomatic agreement was actually a disjointed one. The agreement in Doha was between the Taliban and the United States, while in Kabul, a furious Ghani (who had just barely achieved reelection in 2020) had no choice but to sign a separate agreement with the US defense secretary. Given that his government rather than the Americans controlled most of the prisoners that the Doha Agreement promised would be released, the plan was almost stillborn.[103]

On his own, Afghan president Ghani made various offers, including recognition of the Taliban as a political party once peace was restored. In June 2018, the insurgents grudgingly agreed to Ghani's suggestion of a brief ceasefire during the Eid al-Fitr holiday, but thereafter the attackers, perhaps concerned about losing control of their followers, refused to repeat that experiment.[104]

The Kabul government, for so long associated with foreign forces, had great difficulty achieving legitimacy in the eyes of its own people. Regardless of whether the populace fully understood democracy, persistent extortion of the people as well as vote rigging had made elections highly suspect. By one calculation, at the time of the September 2019 elections, only 9 million out of 15 million eligible Afghan adults were registered and fewer than 2 million actually voted, perhaps because they were hindered by the Taliban. Of that small number, President Ghani was reelected with barely half the votes, or less than 7 percent of the electorate.[105]

For almost two decades, most Afghan officials and soldiers had assumed, with good reason, that the United States would continue to support them indefinitely. The Doha Agreement of 2020 was a clear message to the contrary, and it had a demoralizing effect upon the Afghan state.[106] President Biden's decision in April 2021 to complete the long-delayed withdrawal magnified that demoralization, giving Afghans the same sense of abandonment that had contributed so much to the collapse of South Vietnam in 1974–75.

Biden had long been consistent in his opposition to continued US involvement in Afghanistan, if only because he wanted to cut the Gordian knot of deployment in the country. On paper, the fourth president to confront the struggle had good reason to believe that the combination of American and NATO training with American military aid would prove sufficient for the Afghans to stand on their own against the Taliban and Pakistani meddling. However, logic is not always proof against psychological factors. It remains only to deplore the massive loss of Afghan, American, and other coalition lives

as well as the continuing suffering of the Afghan people both before and after the US withdrawal. Meanwhile, for months the insurgents patiently cut off and took control of one area after another.

NATO's Resolute Support mission officially ended on July 12, 2021, but thereafter the United States decided to temporarily deploy up to 7,000 troops, mostly to secure Hamid Karzai International Airport, during the remaining withdrawal. On August 30, 2021, the United States completed its own withdrawal, including evacuation of some 120,000 local supporters, from Afghanistan. The quantity of American-supplied weaponry left behind raises another apparent parallel to the Vietnamese struggle: in each case, critics have argued that the US military had attempted to turn its local partners into clones, designed and equipped to fight in alliance with Americans rather than stand on their own. Just as in Vietnam, the Americans worked to give the Afghan security forces the same kinds of technological advantages that allowed the Americans to fight outnumbered, but the withdrawal of technicians in May 2021 meant that, by early July, only 88 of 186 Afghan aircraft were flyable.[107]

The collapse of the Western-backed government in Kabul did not bring peace to Afghanistan, which continued to suffer into the fifth decade since the Soviet invasion. The Islamic State in Khorasan Province (IS-K), a local franchise founded in 2015 to include both Afghan and Pakistani militants, continued to recruit radicals who had become disenchanted with the Taliban.[108]

At a high cost in blood, the prolonged counterinsurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq enriched the American military with a new generation of combat veterans while accelerating the aging of weaponry acquired during the 1980s. At considerable expense, army depots located in Anniston, Alabama, and elsewhere spent years rebuilding many of the tanks and other ground vehicles. However, the sustained high operational tempo of equipment such as F-15 series fighters hastened the aging of such airframes to the point where some squadrons could no longer operate.

Perhaps most significant of all, these two protracted struggles revived the same reluctance to use military force that had plagued America after Vietnam. The impatience and reluctance that had prompted Bush and Rumsfeld to worry about long-term military deployments—an avoidance that had exacerbated the difficulties of the two counterinsurgencies—now made the United States hesitant to use armed force even when such use was far more justified than it had been when overthrowing Saddam Hussein. As the next chapter will illustrate, these same political realities discouraged President Obama from using force where needed in Syria and unintentionally encouraged aggressors throughout the world to believe they could act with impunity.

CHAPTER 11

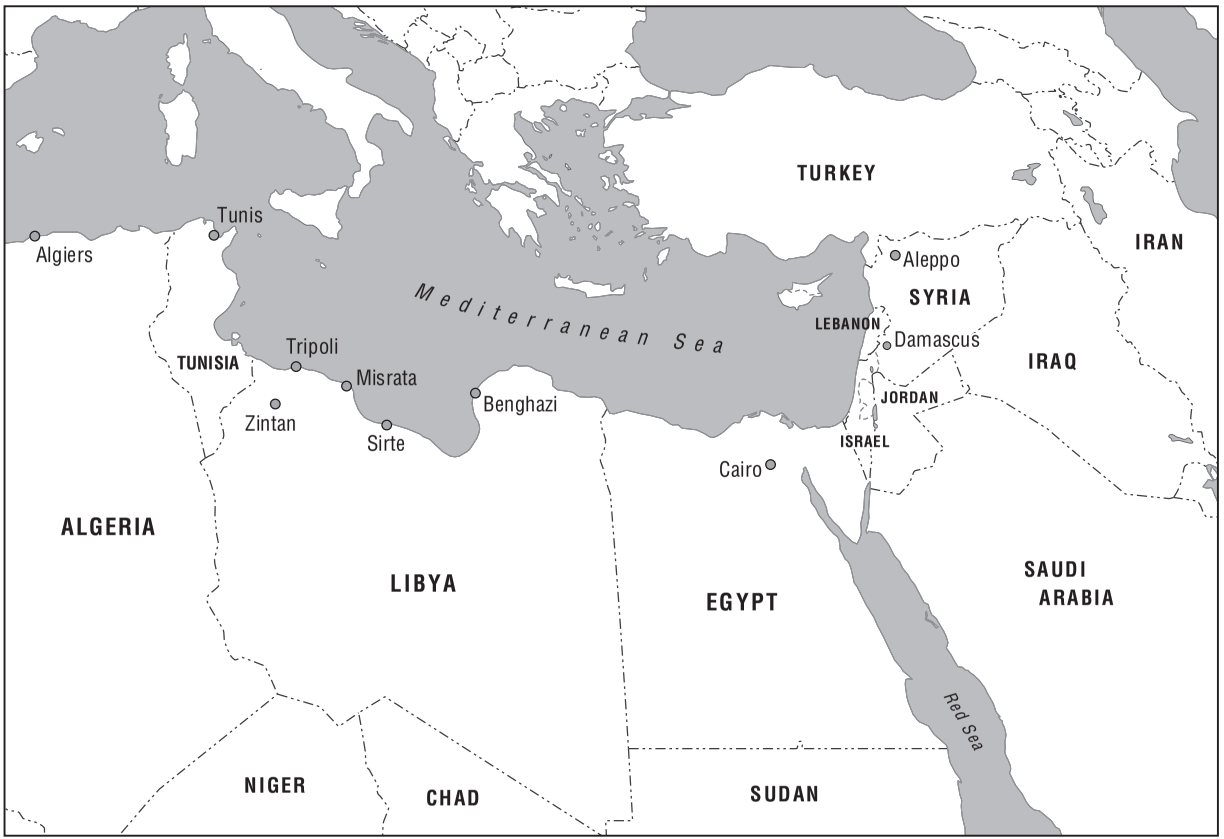
Arab Spring, Libyan and Syrian Summers

American politicians were naive at best to believe that they could quickly foster a pluralistic and democratic Iraq or Afghanistan, but beginning in 2011 a wave of populist uprisings did challenge many of the authoritarian regimes in the Arab world. Unfortunately for the populations involved, some of these uprisings were repressed quickly while others led to even greater suffering and prolonged struggle. Moreover, many of the new movements depended on Islamist radicals or at least used jihadist rhetoric, making Western powers leery of supporting their struggles.

The Arab Spring

Professor Micheline Ishay has argued that widespread public demonstrations in early 2011 signaled "the long-awaited arrival of the Enlightenment" to challenge the authoritarian regimes of the Maghreb and Levant.[1] Enlightenment ideals were almost unknown in those regions, but the worldwide recession that began in 2008 had increased the misery and frustration of many people, especially unemployed youth, and thereby encouraged popular unrest. The emergence of cable television journalism, especially Al Jazeera, helped spread news of protests throughout the region. As in the case of Islamist terrorists, the Internet also provided an unprecedented means to connect with others who shared your own political dissatisfaction, although eventually governments in Egypt, Iran, and elsewhere learned to interrupt Internet service so as to hamper coordination by the protesters. All this assisted Arabic-speaking people in taking political action on their own after decades of manipulation by their rulers.[2]

On December 17, 2010, a Tunisian vegetable marketer set fire to himself to protest unfair treatment by the police, and within four weeks this dramatic act, supported by widespread protests and labor union action, had produced two



Arab Spring. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

hundred deaths and the "Jasmine Revolution" that overthrew the corrupt government of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. Self-immolations followed in Algeria and widespread demonstrations in Egypt. In the latter country, crowds gathered in many cities, although television journalism highlighted the protests in Cairo's Tahrir Square. Security forces hesitated to act against such large crowds, yet an estimated 846 civilians died and more than 6,400 were injured. President Hosni Mubarak tried superficial reforms before February 11, when he ceded control to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, the successors to the revolutionaries who had seized power in 1952, and which now convened new national elections.[3]

The governments originally created through military coups proved most vulnerable to the wave of protests.[4] While Tunisia institutionalized its turn toward democracy, other centers of the Arab Spring had disparate outcomes. The radical Muslim Brotherhood, one of the few independent organized movements in Egypt, won election in 2012, elevating Mohamed Morsi to power, but Morsi's economic and Islamist policies proved unpopular. In July 2013, Morsi's own choice for defense minister, Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, deposed Morsi and eventually succeeded him in power. Egyptian democracy, tarnished by the Muslim Brotherhood, had failed, and a renewed series of demonstrations had encouraged the military to believe it could act with public support. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia repressed civilian protests in Bahrain.[5]

In two other Arab states—Libya and Syria—the Arab Spring led to prolonged struggle and popular suffering.

Libyan Chaos

Mu'ammar al-Gaddhafi has appeared previously in this account as the pontificating, somewhat-delusional dictator of Libya. After seizing power in 1969, he set out to transform both Libya and the Arab World according to his twisted conception of Pan-Arab populism. In addition to meddling in the politics of neighboring states, he spent Libyan oil money on developing weapons of mass destruction and sponsoring terrorist attacks, including the 1988 aircraft bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, and supplying plastic explosives to the Irish Republican Army. Among al-Gaddhafi's bizarre gestures was hosting a squadron of North Korean MiG-21 fighter aircraft, which were based in northeastern Libya during the 1970s, and ostensibly contributing to the defense of Egypt from Israel—only to have Egyptian air defense shoot down a North Korean aircraft by mistake.[6] Prolonged economic sanctions resulting from Libyan terrorism, in addition to the example of how the West overthrew Saddam Hussein, ultimately prompted al-Gaddhafi to renounce the development of WMD (2005) and reduce his foreign meddling. At home, however, he invested in both

personal guards and a national militia but allowed the regular armed forces to wither. Indeed, the dictator systematically destroyed the governing institutions of his country while bombarding his people with such xenophobic rhetoric that they were unwilling to accept foreign advice even after his death.[7] The regime ruthlessly suppressed any opposition, reportedly even sending snipers to kill satirical graffiti painters in Benghazi.[8]

On February 17, 2011, a group of Libyans protested at the Benghazi courthouse and its infamous jail, and thereafter the movement was often referred to as February 17. Three days later, the minister of the interior, Maj. Gen. Abdul Fattah Younis, defected, ordering police not to fire on demonstrators. A National Transitional Council (NTC) formed but still did not trust Younis because of his past actions, while an anti-Gaddhafi militia killed the general in July. As in Egypt, the Libyan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the few organizational structures remaining in the country, began to form its own militia; the involvement of such Islamic radicals made the United States reluctant to support the rebellion. More significant for the long run was the return from exile of Gen. Khalifa Haftar, one of al-Gaddhafi's coconspirators in the 1969 coup who had been disgraced after being captured in the 1987 defeat at Wadi Doum (see chapter 9). The United States and UK announced sanctions against al-Gaddhafi, who attacked his opponents on March 18.[9]

Coincidentally, on the previous day the UN Security Council had passed Resolution 1973, calling on the Libyan government to protect the civilian populace and authorizing member states to intervene for the same purpose.[10] Libya therefore became an opportunity to use the still-controversial responsibility to protect (R2P) doctrine as a justification for interfering in the internal affairs of another state. Such a policy would previously have been considered a violation of the Westphalian system, and it certainly alarmed the Chinese government as a matter of principle. That said, previous painful experiences with "boots on the ground" motivated the Obama administration and most other Western governments to try again to exploit the power of air strikes using precision-guided munitions.

A number of NATO members, including the United States, the UK, France, and Italy, participated in prolonged air strikes that began with Tomahawk and (British) Storm Shadow cruise missiles to suppress Libyan aircraft and air defenses, after which the attackers sought out and tried to destroy al-Gaddhafi's military forces. Initially termed Odyssey Dawn, the overall operation name became Unified Protector (a name that reflected the R2P issue), with the operations center located at Ramstein Air Base in Germany. In response to widespread criticism, NATO declared a no-fly zone effective March 17, 2011, and began enforcing it with air patrols on the 25th, even though the British

Ministry of Defence rightly observed that such a restriction would have little effect on the ground conflict.[11] Not only was targeting mobile elements difficult, but this operation had to compete with Western military requirements in Afghanistan, and therefore Libyan public opinion criticized NATO for its seeming inaction.

When the operation shifted to an authorized NATO (as opposed to ad hoc) effort in April, its direction also shifted from Ramstein to a combined air operations center in Poggio, Italy, at which point the USAF temporarily reduced its participation due to competing requirements elsewhere. French, British, Italian, and Belgian air assets replaced those of the United States, but the attacks previously focused on eastern Libya had now to cover the entire country, again reducing the perceived involvement of NATO air. For the British, at least, the shift from US planning procedures commonly used in Afghanistan to NATO procedures at Poggio caused further disconnects, but by late April the alliance was able to dominate the skies over Libya.[12]

By that point, NATO estimated that it had destroyed 176 tanks, 108 other armored vehicles, and 50 artillery pieces. Within the alliance, disagreements developed concerning bombing strategies against a state that lacked many of the traditional target sets associated with airpower theory. Planners attempted to influence regime behavior (an approach termed "force on mind") by destroying communications nodes, but this concept had little effect, perhaps because al-Gaddhafi's regime was already fragmented. Like effects-based operations, the psychological consequences of physical bombing attacks were sometimes unpredictable and even unknowable. While NATO continued to seek coordination between its air efforts (military) and the three other elements of national power—diplomatic, informational, and economic—the most effective methodology, beyond assisting the Libyan rebels by attacking ground elements, was to focus on the dictator's limited capabilities in command, control, and communications.[13]

A variety of techniques enabled NATO air planners to overcome the fleeting nature of targets in Libya. Predator unmanned aerial vehicles and airborne radar helped identify and follow the regime's mobile forces, but by itself such data did not clearly differentiate friend from foe in a chaotic situation of civil war where both sides possessed similar equipment. On April 8, 2011, for example, NATO mistakenly bombed a column of twenty rebel-operated tanks despite General Younis's belief that he had informed the alliance in advance of this armored movement; the British deputy commander of Unified Protector denied any such input.[14] In any event, NATO had limited reconnaissance aircraft in the region, so friend or foe information came indirectly from various Libyans on the ground. Much has been made of the ingenious method of

Libyans using Twitter to send information to sites in the United States, where sympathizers employed Google Earth to translate the locations into latitude and longitude.[15] Although this certainly occurred, much of the targeting input came from various ex-Libyan military officers who set up operations rooms and tried to communicate more directly with NATO.[16]

Because these defectors were associated with different armed resistance groups, their involvement exacerbated a growing problem within the Libyan Revolution. Not only ideologies and tribal geography but egos prompted various militias to avoid cooperating with each other; these internal fractures grew when those militias acquired foreign backers. An unusual example of this was Qatar, which apparently sought to identify a single leader with which to deal, but unintentionally magnified the rivalries. At an early stage in the conflict, Qatar gave several satellite telephones to the rebel NTC government in Benghazi, enabling it to communicate with foreign governments and thereby enhance its credibility. The Gulf state also established an operations center in Zintan, a largely Berber city some eighty-five miles (136 km) west of Tripoli in northwestern Libya. As an early locus of opposition to al-Gaddhafi, the city attracted considerable outside support, including as many as seventy-five Qatari special operations soldiers and much weaponry. (France reportedly authorized Qatar to transfer Milan antitank rockets to Libya, while other Western states wanted to maintain deniability by shipping only commonly available, Soviet bloc weapons.) On June 12, three weeks after rebels had seized control of an airport near the port city of Misrata (116 miles/187 km east of Tripoli), Qatar and Sudan began flying weapons into that airport while trawlers and tugboats, some of which were interdicted by NATO in its efforts to enforce an arms embargo, smuggled additional munitions. Smaller numbers of British Special Air Service and French special operations soldiers entered the country elsewhere, coordinating air strikes and advising rebels.[17] Still, the NTC and other aspiring ruling factions lacked funds to conduct minimal government operations.

In addition to weapons smuggled into Libya, the resistance acquired munitions by posing as volunteers applying to join al-Gaddhafi's "People's Resistance Forces" and by hit-and-run raids on the homes and checkpoints of his supporters. The principal resistance groups in Tripoli—Muslim Brotherhood, National Front for the Salvation of Libya, and 17 February Coalition (usually referred to by the first word in that title, "I'tilaf")—were unable to agree on how to secure and administer Tripoli, and a failed attack in July brought down repression that disorganized the opposition. Finally, on August 16–17, 2011, Qatari-advised forces came down from the Nafusa Mountains of northwestern Libya and encircled the capital. Foreign advisers arranged air strikes while Predators cleared the coastal highway. Inside the city, the sudden advent of

multiple small attacks demoralized regime forces, who soon fled the city. Once again, however, the different groups quarreled among themselves, especially when it came to claiming responsibility for victory.[18]

The previous regime was not dead yet. Al-Gaddhafi concentrated his remaining forces at Sirte, a port between Tripoli and Benghazi. Having been born in that area, the dictator had lavished resources on it and therefore acquired considerable local support in the town. For six weeks during September–October 2011, local ground troops and NATO air strikes vied with the regime for control of the town. Finally, on October 19, al-Gaddhafi withdrew his remaining supporters from Sirte, and the next day a column of about fifty vehicles, some of them with antiaircraft weapons, departed the area. NATO had been unable to locate al-Gaddhafi himself, but this large convoy naturally attracted first Predator-launched missiles and then French, British, and other air strikes.[19]

Within minutes, most of the convoy was reduced to smoking ruins. Rebel fighters searched the area and, after a brief firefight, captured the dictator, who had been hiding in a drainage pipe, bleeding with a broken leg. Cell phone footage recorded the last moments of his life, taunted and tortured by his opponents before someone shot him fatally. Nor was he the only victim of revolutionary rage: fifty-three loyalists were later found in Sirte, shot dead with their hands bound behind their backs.[20]

Post-Gaddhafi Libya

The dictator's death did not end violence and disorder in the country. Assisted by the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), the NTC managed to conduct fair elections on July 7, 2012, with 1.7 million Libyans (62 percent of registered voters) casting ballots. On August 8, the NTC formally handed power over to the senior member of the new General National Congress, or GNC, which included thirty-three women among its two hundred members. Given the fragmented nature of the Libyan electorate, however, no one party or group had a working majority. Distrustful of any central authority, several tribes and geographical groups wanted a decentralized, federal government. Struggles continued with the new government unable to enforce any order.[21]

Western intelligence agencies understandably focused on jihadists rather than the confused and confusing multitude of militia groups. Inadequate security forces for US diplomats complicated the matter—sixteen special operators had arrived to train counterterrorism forces, but this team reported to AFRICOM rather than to the embassy, so the State Department asked the Defense Department to terminate their presence. The department also turned down several offers of Marine security forces, preferring to rely on a

combination of Diplomatic Security personnel and Libyan contract guards. Part of the issue was the charismatic personality of the interim ambassador, J. Christopher Stevens, who sought to establish personal contact with various individuals on the ground and did not want to be surrounded by guards. Stevens was determined to visit Benghazi despite major security concerns. On September 11–12, 2012, an armed mob rushed the gate of the American consulate in Benghazi; subsequent study established that this was the work not of any major militia but rather of radical Islamist Ahmed Abu Khattala, who drew supporters from various groups. Stevens and three other Americans died before a relief team from Tripoli and a Marine security element could arrive. This unfortunate incident distracted much American political attention away from the long-term issues of stabilizing the country.[22]

A month later, the GNC chose formerly exiled lawyer Ali Zeidan as prime minister; Zeidan soon recognized that effective government required a new army to replace the nonfunctional Libyan armed forces. The new US ambassador, Deborah Jones, supported the plan, and the G-8 group of nations agreed to train up to 20,000 soldiers as a basic infantry force, although the American military considered the concept unworkable. Zeidan could not find sufficient recruits for this program, and some of the volunteers who did come forward appeared more interested in personal pleasure than in learning to be disciplined soldiers. In October 2014, for example, three hundred Libyans sent to the UK for training went absent without leave and created disorders in Cambridge; when Americans attempted to train a counterterrorism battalion in western Libya, the recruits allowed locals to loot the training base. Without an effective military force, Prime Minister Zeidan became the scapegoat for numerous problems in his country; at one point he was kidnapped by Islamists, then he continued vainly trying to bring order to the country. Much of that effort depended on selling oil to raise foreign currency. Zeidan's final fall came in March 2014, when Navy SEALs seized a North Korean tanker carrying Libyan oil and returned the vessel to Libya rather than allow the petroleum to reach Pyongyang in violation of sanctions. In despair, Zeidan went into exile.[23]

In June 2014, new elections in Libya produced a House of Representatives (HOR) that only further fractured political leadership, with the new house in Tobruk controlling much of the country's petroleum production, while the GNC continued to operate from Tripoli. Financed by a number of sheikhs and armed by various groups, General Haftar had already parlayed his military following into what he termed the Libyan National Army (LNA). Eventually aligned with the HOR, the LNA dominated much of the eastern part of the country. In 2016, however, three French military advisers to the LNA died when an opposing group shot down their helicopter.[24]

In December 2015, the UN brokered a deal between the GNC, HOR, and other groups to create a Government of National Accord (GNA), which lasted until 2021. Such agreements did not put an end to fighting, however. The radical group Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), based in Syria (see below), saw the chaos in Libya as an opportunity to create a new center of its so-called caliphate. By early 2015, ISIS had begun to send skilled organizers as well as new recruits to Derna, where they used local Islamist militias to take control and impose ISIS's own version of Sharia law, taxing everyone and enslaving local women. Just as elsewhere, ISIS arrogance evoked local resistance, to which British, French, and other special operators contributed. On February 20, two F-15s bombed a farm that ISIS had used to train suicide bombers. Local militia forced the extremists to retreat, but by early 2016 ISIS was firmly entrenched in Sirte. Such disorder disrupted the oil output and power generation in the east, while food and foreign currency became scarce.[25]

The struggle to root out ISIS influence proved both bloody and prolonged. In January 2017, one of President Obama's last acts as president was to authorize another bombing attack against ISIS in Libya; American air strikes declined under the Trump administration. In total, more than 4,300 artillery, air, and Predator strikes by foreign powers occurred in Libya between 2012 and 2020, causing at least 871 known civilian deaths. In addition, both the GNA and Haftar's LNA acquired their own air components. With 355,000 internally displaced people and 47,000 external refugees, Libyan society continued to deteriorate while protection of civilians was woefully lacking.[26]

Syria Collapses

Like Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the Syrian Air Force officer Hafiz al-Assad had used his involvement in the Ba'ath Party as a vehicle to gain power. Following the humiliating Syrian failure during the 1970 Black September crisis in neighboring Jordan,[27] Assad seized power and ruled as a dictator from 1971 until his death in 2000. His inexperienced younger son Bashar succeeded him as president. Bashar handed out lucrative business opportunities to reward corrupt cronies. He also continued repressive controls over the population while exploiting internal social divisions, including a massacre of ethnic Kurds in northeast Syria in 2004. Just as Saddam had relied on loyalists from his hometown of Tikrit, the Assad family was part of and depended on the Alawis, an unusual sect dating from the ninth century (about 12–15 percent of Syrians) that incorporated elements of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism and had prospered during French colonization of the area.[28]

War and insurgency in neighboring Iraq produced 1 million refugees, many of whom ended up in already-impoverished Syria. Soon thereafter, extreme

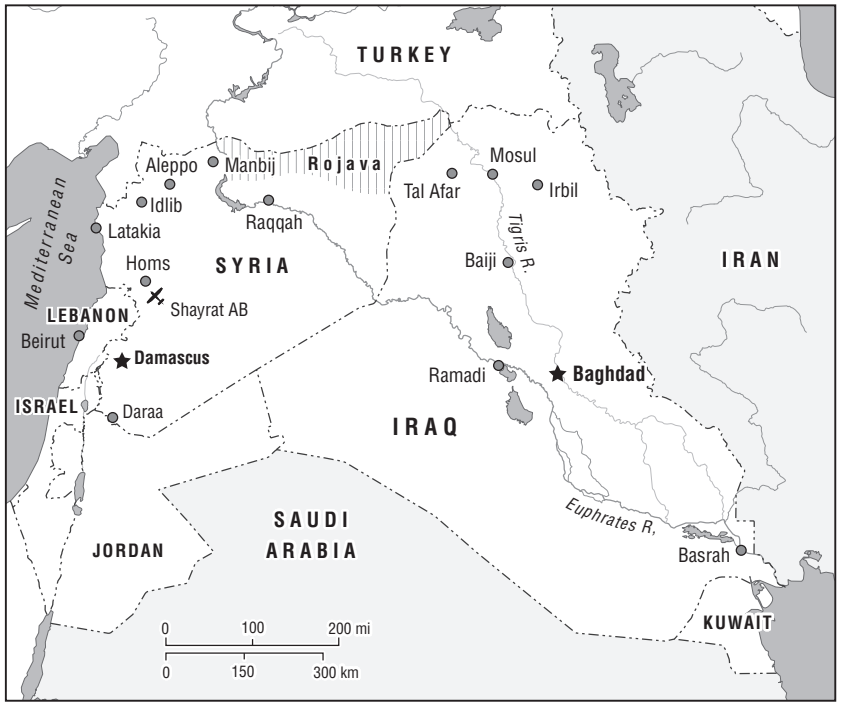
drought between 2007 and 2010 caused many Syrian farms to fail while livestock died off. All this added economic woes to the sense of oppression under the Assads.[29]

Concerned by domestic unrest, Syria sought to deflect American suspicions against it by voting for UN Security Council Resolution 1441, on November 8, 2002, to pressure Iraq to comply on WMD. Warned by a visit from Secretary of State Powell, Syria refrained from aiding Iraq or terrorists. Yet Syria's hard-liner Ba'athists still suspected that the United States intended to divide up the Middle East, including Syria. Their suspicions seemed confirmed when, in September 2004, the United States and France obtained another UNSCR, 1559, demanding that foreign forces—including the Syrian occupiers—withdraw from Lebanon and permit fair elections.[30]

These concerns prompted the Damascus government to work with Hezbollah and Iran to contribute to the disorders in Iraq, seeking to keep the United States distracted. To further this aim, in early 2011 Bashir's government released a large number of jihadist prisoners that it expected would join the struggle in its neighbor to the east. Instead, these radicals only increased domestic tensions by violence against Sunni civilians in a state already divided by social inequalities.[31] Drought and crop failures in 2008 had increased internal suffering and migration. All these factors, including the examples of the Arab Spring elsewhere, contributed to the outbreak of domestic rebellion against the Assad regime in March 2011.

The uprising began in the city of Daraa as protests against government corruption and exploitation; when security forces shot two protesters dead, the killings only inspired other Syrians, especially youths, to redouble their efforts.[32] Bashar al-Assad made a few gestures of conciliation but quickly turned to defiance as repeated massacres by government forces and pro-Assad militias escalated into full-blown civil war. Although the Syrian officer corps was heavily Alawi, the rank-and-file security forces were mostly Sunni; between 2011 and 2013 army strength declined from 220,000 to about 65,000 due to desertions and casualties. The rebels were divided by both their motivations and their foreign sponsors. Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia all attempted to fund as well as control various rebel groups, who also received funds from Syrian expatriates. The most significant rebel group, which included a number of soldiers who had defected, emerged in mid-2011 as the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

During the early 1980s, the elder Assad had crushed the Muslim Brotherhood by using a few trusted units and focusing on the major cities. His son attempted the same approach in 2011, sending three so-called special forces brigades, each supported by a mechanized or armored brigade, to clear Daraa. More generally, except for the 4th Armored Division (commanded by his



Syria-Iraq War Zone. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

brother), Assad normally used only loyal detachments of army divisions rather than entire units. Yet, the 2011 insurgency was too widespread to be controlled by such limited detachments, and Bashar al-Assad eventually had to turn to militias as well as foreign allies. By attempting to clear opposition urban strongholds during 2011–12, the dictator displaced large populations and only increased sectarian divisions. Indiscriminate air strikes on urban areas made the situation worse. Eventually, the regime exercised little control outside of the cities of Damascus and Homs plus a few isolated military bases.[33]

In August 2011, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI, aka Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia and later Islamic State in Iraq), sent the experienced radical Abu Mohammad al-Jolani back to his native Syria, where Jolani contacted small cells associated with AQI. These groups coalesced that fall into Jabhat al-Nusra (the Support Front), a jihadist group that defied and opposed ISIS. Jolani began to depict al-Nusra as jihadis trying to implement Islamic law in al-Sham (greater Syria). The group issued a series of video announcements, and by mid-2012 it was claiming responsibility each month for sixty bombings and assassinations against regime forces and the Syrian Mukhabarat (security

police). Bashar al-Assad capitalized on those bombs to characterize *all* of his opponents as terrorists, an accusation supported by skillful cyberattacks and media manipulation. He even ascribed the November 2015 extremist attacks in Paris to Syrian rebels.[34]

Bashar received aid from both Russia and Iran, including extensive forces and weaponry from Iranian-allied Hezbollah. In June 2013, Hezbollah soldiers led the government's recapture of al-Qusayr in western Syria, but overall a strategic stalemate developed.[35] When other attacks failed, al-Assad began to besiege and cut off rebel towns such as Homs, just northeast of Lebanon. There, the regime starved civilians and endlessly inhibited negotiations for humanitarian aid. Even after the government officially approved an aid convoy, Bashar's political militias attacked it. In response, the opposition launched a variety of attacks inside Lebanon against Hezbollah and sometimes the Lebanese army itself.

The CIA and US Special Operations Command reportedly attempted to train and arm insurgents but were hampered both by limited funds and by Washington's determination to support only those who were not in any way associated with Islamist radicals. One such program trained insurgents in Turkey, but its recruits were both underfed and motivated to fight the Assad regime rather than al-Qaeda affiliates. In at least one instance, newly trained insurgents turned their weaponry over to Jabhat al-Nusra. The Turkish government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan complained bitterly whenever Kurds received US military aid, and he quickly radicalized the training center in Turkey after Washington paused the training program.[36]

Just as in neighboring Iraq during the preceding decade, the Syrian government's attacks on Sunni portions of the population attracted significant support from outside radicals. By September 2015, there were at least 30,000 foreign fighters, including 6,000 from Europe and a small number of Chechen radicals, inside Iraq in a multitude of different groups. To some extent, social media allowed even small rebel groups to maintain their independent identity by publicizing and exaggerating their actions. Despite its al-Qaeda origins, Jabhat al-Nusra—designated a terrorist group by the United States in December 2015—parlayed its early and highly visible attacks into a position of broader support than many rivals enjoyed. The extreme jihadist groups at least appeared to be the best equipped and most effective opponents of Bashar's Ba'athist state, and battered Syrian Sunnis responded.[37] Working alone, with jihadist groups such as Ahrar al-Sham, or sometimes in temporary, local coalitions with other opposition groups, Jabhat al-Nusra proved very effective at the tactical level, steadily creating areas of control in several portions of Syria. Neither the Free Syrian Army nor the Revolutionary Command Council (formed in November

2014 by seventy-two factions, many of them jihadist) was able to achieve sufficient unity to defeat the Assad regime. By 2015, an estimated 80,000 regime soldiers, disproportionately Alawi, had died, as had 110,000 civilians, including at least 12,000 children.[38]

WMD Encore

The Assad regime was responsible for the majority of these civilian casualties, routinely firing artillery and conducting air strikes on populated areas that it considered rebellious. The Syrians were especially noteworthy in using improvised barrel bombs, filled with explosives and dropped without guidance from helicopters. This callous disregard for civilian lives was highlighted by several notable uses of chemical weapons.

During and after the repeated wars with Israel, the Assad government had developed chemical weapons—including sarin, mustard gas, and possibly VX—and may also have experimented with biological agents. Damascus apparently considered both chemical and biological agents as weapons of last resort. Quite apart from the moral and legal prohibitions against using such weapons, especially on civilians, as a practical matter the Assad regime possessed very inaccurate means of delivery—Soviet Scud-B/C and SS-21 (Scarab) missiles plus the North Korean–supplied Scud-D, as well as aircraft bombs and yet more improvised helicopter delivery systems. Each month, the regime fired twenty or more ballistic missiles with explosive warheads, but again their inaccuracy made such weapons useless except in terror attacks on the population.[39]

President Obama had issued several public warnings that use of chemical weapons would lead to American military retaliation. Unfortunately for deterrence, the United States was already war-weary and disinclined to risk another conflict. The president eventually asked for a congressional resolution on the matter, but Congress was too gridlocked and too leery of responsibility to agree. A public opinion poll taken during April–May 2013 indicated that 60 percent of Americans opposed military intervention in Syria.[40]

Early on August 21, 2013, a year after Obama's public warning, the Syrian government fired missiles at East Ghouta, a rebel-held suburb of Damascus, where the population immediately exhibited symptoms of a nerve gas attack. Heavy fighting prevented UN inspectors from visiting the area until five days later, but they eventually concluded that the regime had used sarin on its own people. Opposition groups proclaimed their intention of killing Alawis in retaliation.[41]

Assad's Russian allies attempted to disarm world criticism of the chemical attack and bolster the shaky Syrian regime. After initially claiming that the insurgents were responsible for the August 21 attack, Moscow negotiated a

US-Russian Framework (September 14, 2013) whereby Syria would surrender its chemical weapons for destruction on shipboard. One month later, Syria belatedly signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, thereby permitting inspections by the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).[42] The last of Damascus's declared chemical munitions departed the following June.

Yet this diplomatic solution, however encouraging it might appear, did not end the use of chemical weapons in Syria. In 2016, an OPCW investigation concluded that the government had used chlorine in three chemical attacks, while the Islamic State (see below) had deployed some form of sulfur mustard on at least one occasion. Most seriously, on April 4, 2017, the Assad government conducted another sarin nerve gas attack on Khan Shaykhun in the northwestern Idlib Province. Damascus denied having any aircraft in the area at the time, but this denial was contradicted by a Russian claim that a Syrian air strike had unwittingly bombed a rebel chemical weapon site. Moscow vetoed a Security Council resolution condemning the attack.[43]

The US national security advisor at the time, General McMaster, convinced President Trump to retaliate. Two destroyers in the Mediterranean launched fifty-nine cruise missiles aimed primarily at Shayrat Airbase, the presumed source of the Syrian chemical attack. Reportedly, however, the United States provided prior warning to avoid casualties among the Russian forces in Syria (see below), so the Russians passed this warning on to the Syrian Air Force and thereby minimized the effects of the cruise missiles.[44]

The Assad regime apparently learned to be more circumspect about its use of WMD, but the same could not be said of its opponents. In August 2015, for example, the Islamic State used blister agents in artillery attacks not on the Assad regime but rather on other opposition groups.[45]

Islamic State

Despite the enormous suffering of the Syrian people, the most significant outcome of the civil war was the formation of the so-called Islamic State. Assad's loss of control led not so much to a power vacuum as a vortex that sucked in various jihadi groups and thereby created a threat to the entire region.

As noted above, Jabhat al-Nusra had begun as a satellite band using the weapons and fanaticism of al-Qaeda's affiliated groups in Iraq and Syria. On April 8, 2013, al-Baghdadi announced a unified Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (Levant or greater Syria), known as ISIS (or sometimes ISIL). Al-Baghdadi claimed to be the caliph of this supposedly supranational state, a direct challenge to the legitimacy of other radical groups, including the Taliban. More significantly for the immediate future, the new caliph insisted that

Jabhat al-Nusra was a subordinate part of ISIS/ISIL; Abu Mohammad al-Jolani publicly disagreed, and Ayman al-Zawahiri, the titular head of al-Qaeda after US forces killed Osama bin Laden in May 2011, made a public announcement claiming to cancel the merger. In practice, however, Jabhat al-Nusra split, with some members transferring allegiance to ISIS while the majority remained as a separate rebel group within Syria. ISIS issued well-produced videos and other publications both for recruitment and to assert its leadership of the new radical Islamic government. Hundreds and eventually thousands of recruits joined this group, some traveling to Syria for military training, while others launched lone-wolf attacks in locales as far away as Canada. ISIS also claimed responsibility for savage attacks against all entities not under its control, beginning with massive car bombs inside both Turkey and Syria and continuing with deadly force used to repress opposition in the areas it controlled.[46] The ISIS commander in northern Syria, a Georgian who had adopted the name of Abu Omar al-Shishani, brought in Chechen radicals.[47] With a long history of administrative bureaucracy, ISIS established its capital in the north-central Syrian city of Raqqah and set out to form an effective if radical government that insisted on a puritanical interpretation of Sharia law.

ISIS fighters were well trained and fanatically dedicated, but the organization was so intolerant that it attacked in all directions at once rather than planning a coherent strategy. The jihadis frequently harassed and murdered Armenian and Assyrian Christians, taking hostages for ransom and driving those groups to join rival factions for self-defense. In addition to quarreling with the (primarily Sunni) Kurds in the region, ISIS also decided that the Yazidis, a group with a pre-Zoroastrian religion, were apostates who must be destroyed, attacking them in August 2014. Some members of the Marxist-oriented Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) crossed into Syria to help local Kurds and Yazidis against ISIS; the combined Kurdish-Yazidi force was able to halt the ISIS advance, but the presence of the PKK fed Turkish suspicions about the potential threat of organized Kurdish forces on its border. Indeed, President Erdoğan repeatedly provided assistance to jihadi groups attacking the Kurds.[48]

Russian Involvement

Moscow has appeared periodically in this prolonged chronology of Syrian suffering. The Soviet Union had long had an informal alliance with the Assad regime, including a naval base and SIGINT collection site in Syria, but Russian president Vladimir Putin sought a larger role in the conflict to reassert his country as a world power. In September 2015, Putin conferred with Iran's Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commander Soleimani, both of whom had provided extensive support to the

Assad regime. Putin decided to intervene militarily, dispatching a significant aerial force to operate from a base at Bashar al-Assad International Airport.[49] In a highly publicized move, on October 7, Russian vessels in the Caspian Sea launched twenty-six 3M54 (NATO designation SS-N-27 Sizzler) cruise missiles. A few missiles reportedly crashed en route, but the majority struck FSA and al-Nusra bases in northwestern Syria.[50] On November 20, a similar volley of cruise missiles this time targeted the ISIS capital at Raqqah.

The Russian effort was not without costs. On November 24, 2015, Ankara repeatedly warned Russian aircraft that they were violating its airspace, after which a Turkish F-16 shot down a Russian Su-24.[51] Turkey and Syria had previously downed each other's aircraft under similar circumstances. Moscow protested vociferously but eventually came to an understanding with Ankara, which shared many of Russia's interests in the Syrian conflict.

Like the Assad regime, Russia claimed that it was targeting "terrorists" even when it attacked non-Islamist resistance groups. In March 2016, Moscow announced that it had fulfilled its objectives and would withdraw, seeking to get US sanctions lifted, although Russian aid to Syria continued at lower levels. Russian strategic interests could be satisfied with Assad's control of western Syria rather than the entire state.[52] Russian servicemen gained considerable combat experience and assisted the Assad regime in retaining control, but were not decisive.

Back to Iraq

Flushed with victory and religious fervor, ISIS invaded western Iraq on June 4, 2014, quickly overrunning Mosul on the 10th and Tikrit the following day. The Sunni extremists massacred 1,700 Iraqi Shi'ite air force cadets, encouraging the rout of many Iraqi military units over the next few weeks. Nuri al-Maliki and other Iraqi leaders had systematically purged Sunni leaders from the government after the US withdrawal, then aligned themselves with Iran in support of al-Assad.[53] The net effect was to undermine the cohesion and military effectiveness of Iraq's own security forces. The resulting heavily Shi'a armed forces felt alienated in Sunni northern Iraq. Still, even some Sunnis were offended by ISIS radicalism.[54]

For several weeks, ISIS forces advanced toward Baghdad almost unopposed, using suicide bombers to break resistance and then capturing large quantities of American-supplied vehicles and weapons. Yet their reach exceeded their grasp, in the sense that they could not administer this vast area, let alone control popular resistance. Moreover, their very success attracted a strange coalition of former adversaries to halt them. Kurdish militias that had previously opposed each other now cooperated, with US air and special operations support,

to stabilize the front around Kirkuk; in the process, the Kurds took control of lands that they had disputed with Sunni Iraqis. French air and special operations elements also participated, while maintaining a very low profile. The disgraced al-Maliki had to resign as prime minister on August 14, although he soon became a vice president. American and Quds Force advisers cooperated (separately) in rebuilding the Iraqi security forces and aiding various sectarian militias to push the invaders back. The Quds Force–backed Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) retook Tikrit in April 2015 but then quarreled with other factions as to who would control the area.[55] The rebuilt government security forces with US air, Iranian, and PMF support cleared the oil refinery town of Baiji in October, followed by a bitter struggle to retake Ramadi from ISIS in the late winter of 2015–16.[56]

As ISIS lost control of most of Iraq, the focus of fighting shifted back to northeastern Syria, sometimes referred to as "Rojava," a reference to western Kurdistan. Two Kurdish-based militias, the People's Defense Units (YPG) and affiliated Women's Defense Units (YPJ), sometimes working with local Arabs and other elements of the Syrian resistance, had gradually expanded their control over a wide strip of land along the Turkish border. In May 2016, USMC special operators provided Zodiac boats and ponton segments to help the YPG and other Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) cross the Euphrates River and attack the ISIS-controlled city of Manbij, Syria. It took most of the summer to clear the city while combatting repeated suicide bombings, after which it became the forward headquarters of Joint Task Force Inherent Resolve, the small commitment of US forces against ISIS. The United States and even YPG commanders worked to downplay the Kurdish core of these efforts, pretending that YPG/YPJ was simply a part of the SDF. Yet, the Turkish government became increasingly concerned, in part because different Kurdish elements transferred weapons freely across the nominal Syrian-Iraqi border.[57] In secret, Turkey had conducted talks with the PKK to reach some compromise, but those talks collapsed in mid-2015, after which Turkey redoubled its efforts to repress any Kurdish organization.[58]

From the Jaws of Victory

In June 2017, the Syrian Democratic Forces—including the YPG/YPJ—encircled and attacked the ISIS capital of Raqqah, having already cooperated in the clearing of fanatics southeast of the city. Raqqah was a long and bitter struggle involving numerous casualties both from Islamist IEDs and American air strikes. In October, the SDF declared the capital cleared, although the Islamist nature of ISIS meant that its adherents continued to take intermittent terrorist action. In the interim, however, the Syrian resistance forces declared

an Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES). Almost 2,000 American special operations forces remained in the area and conducted joint patrols with the SDF, their presence discouraging Syrian or Turkish actions in the region.[59]

Yet President Erdoğan found the Kurdish involvement in AANES intolerable. It is unclear whether he considered these Kurds to be actual terrorists or simply sought domestic approval by taking simpleminded yet apparently decisive action. For more than a year, he insisted that Manbij was a center of terrorist activity that must be restored to Arab control, while the US military attempted to satisfy Ankara without abandoning the Kurds, who had been key in defeating ISIS. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo arranged a telephone conversation between Presidents Erdoğan and Trump, scheduled on December 14, 2018. Living down to his reputation of acting without preparation, Trump reportedly failed to review background briefings and recommendations before the call. Yet, for all his poses of military toughness, the US president had already telegraphed his reluctance—for domestic political reasons—to risk further American casualties. Rather than offering a compromise on the issue, Trump impulsively told Erdoğan that the United States would withdraw completely from Syria, accepting Erdoğan's rhetorical offer to have Turkish forces finish the struggle against ISIS. In a stroke, without any consultation with allies or Congress, the American president abandoned and betrayed the Kurds who had loyally fought alongside Americans for years. Both the Assad regime and the defeated remnants of ISIS got a respite. After criticizing his predecessor, Obama, for failing to stop aggressors in the Middle East, Trump had done exactly the same thing.[60]

Six days after the telephone conversation, having failed to dissuade the president from this disastrous and dishonorable course of action, Defense Secretary James Mattis resigned in protest. His resignation letter made no specific mention of Turkey and the Kurds but did emphasize the importance of keeping faith with and respecting allies. Jack Keane, the retired general who had repeatedly influenced Washington's policy on the Middle East, reportedly refused to succeed Mattis.[61] Turkish military forces using American-supplied weapons occupied a buffer zone inside northern Syria, including most of the Rojava/AANES. Although some American forces remained in the area,[62] Turkish units continued to attack the Kurds periodically for at least four years after Trump had virtually abandoned them.

One final victim of the continuing fighting was Iranian general Soleimani. For years, he had moved freely throughout Middle East conflict zones, directing attacks against Israelis, Americans, and others while remaining personally invulnerable to the violence he orchestrated. At President Trump's direction,

on January 3, 2020, a UAV missile strike killed Soleimani along with Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis near the Baghdad airport.[63] Despite the fact that his proxies had repeatedly attacked American troops in Syria and Iraq, Soleimani's death aroused outrage among Iranians, leading to a quest for revenge. The Baghdad government complained, with more justification, that the attack violated Iraqi sovereignty, yet the same was true of the general's presence there. A week after Soleimani's death, the IRGC fired a volley of Scud missiles at an Iraqi air base used by American troops fighting against ISIS. Advanced intelligence warning enabled the defenders to disperse most of their forces outside the target zone. Although Trump claimed that no injuries resulted, the United States eventually identified some thirty-four American wounded, many of them with traumatic brain injuries from the missile concussion.[64]

Assessment

The Arab Spring that had started with such high hopes ended with enormous suffering, especially in Libya and Syria. By 2019, almost half of Syria's population had been displaced by war, including 6.7 million internally displaced people plus 3.6 million refugees in Turkey and 662,000 in Jordan.[65] At least 500,000 had died in the civil war. Even in 2022, Central Command reported a massive jailbreak of extremists in Syria, while estimating that the United States had killed 466 ISIS operatives in Syria and another 220 in Iraq.[66] In turn, the flood of refugees leaving Iraq, Syria, Libya, and elsewhere was the primary driver behind the thousands attempting to cross the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas, where some drowned. The millions of refugees who made it to Europe overwhelmed the humanitarian services of various European states. The European Union and the coast guards of governments as far away as the United Kingdom were hard-pressed. Once these refugees stopped moving, cultural and linguistic differences produced enormous friction throughout Europe including in Scandinavia, fanning resentment as well as cultural, ethnic, and religious discrimination.

The actions of ISIS had disrupted insurgent efforts against the Assad regime, offering that regime a temporary respite in the ongoing civil war. ISIS offensives into both Iraq and the Kurdish enclaves of northern Syria had initial success but also attracted American and Turkish efforts that intensified the suffering in both states. The involvement of Russian forces in Syria made a significant contribution to al-Assad's survival in power and prepared those forces for Vladimir Putin's aggressions against Ukraine.

CHAPTER 12

Putin's Revenge

The Russian Resurgence

As noted in chapter 3, multiple factors tore the Soviet Union apart in the early 1990s, and the rump state of the Russian Federation not only struggled economically but resented what appeared to be Western disrespect of Russia's lost great-power status and especially the enlargement of NATO toward the east.[1] When Moscow began to recover its military power two decades later, Russian leaders sought to reassert Russia's global status and incidentally regain control of the lost, non-Russian parts of the former empire.

Like most humans, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin was the product of his education and experiences. This highly intelligent and determined man was trained in the Marxist Soviet Union, and as such he regarded most religions, democracies, and nationalist movements as mechanisms designed to control and mislead populations rather than sources of intense motivation. In this regard, Putin's own sense of Russian nationalism may have impeded his understanding of opposing viewpoints.[2] As a career officer of the KGB, he witnessed firsthand the collapse of East Germany but concluded that Western interference, not popular opposition to autocracy, was the culprit for this defeat. The overthrow of Warsaw Pact governments as well as the so-called color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and other former Soviet republics appeared to him not as true expressions of democracy but rather as Western threats to regional security.[3] Having been a loyal servant of the Soviet Union, Putin remarked in 2005 that he regarded the collapse of that state as the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe" of the twentieth century, one that he would reverse if he could.[4] By some accounts, Putin believed in the czarist chauvinism that Russians, Ukrainians, and other Slavic groups were actually one people, in this instance supposedly split by Western conspiracies.[5] The counterintelligence cynicism learned in the KGB continued when he headed the Russian Federal Security Service before Boris Yeltsin made him first prime minister and then acting president of the federation.

In Soviet rhetoric, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization had always been an American tool that posed an aggressive threat to the regime in Moscow. After initial efforts at Russian-Western understanding and cooperation during the early 1990s, competition resumed with issues such as NATO's air attacks on Yugoslavia and US interference in Russian natural gas sales. In retrospect, the West repeatedly "disrespected" Russian interests and pride. For Putin, therefore, the first steps in restoring Russian security in the new century were to rebuild the armed forces while halting and if possible rolling back the post–Cold War expansion of NATO membership. In the process, Moscow sought to reassert its role as a world power, including control of the former Soviet republics and the USSR's satellites.

Restructure and Recruiting

Defense reform in Russia had begun in the 1990s, even before Putin took office. An August 1998 government plan directed that the military districts—the area and administrative commands that also served as the mobilization structure—would realign with Interior Ministry districts; in theory, at least, this shift simplified both logistics and national security command and control. Special operations (Spetsnaz) forces, historically considered to be reconnaissance units, would all be transferred to the Main Intelligence Directorate (Glavnoye razvedyvatel'noye upravleniye, GRU) of the military. The Strategic Rocket Forces, Space Forces, and airborne/air assault command (Vozdushno-Desantnye Voiska, VDV) remained directly subordinate to the Defense Ministry's Ground Forces, while special-purpose forces stayed under presidential control. This restructuring also unified the procurement and supply system. In total, these cuts envisioned consolidating and reducing noncombat troops by some 300,000.[6]

During the 1990s, President Yeltsin had prodded the derelict Russian army to convert from conscription to career or contract soldiers. This policy was driven in part by cost savings and in part by the shortage of qualified draftees: draft avoidance had become common in the 1990s, and in any event both the numbers and physical health of draft-age young men declined sharply as Russia entered another trough in its birth rate. This experiment in professionalization began with the units then serving in Chechnya, including 76th Airborne Division and 42nd Motorized Rifle Division, but low pay and other issues made it difficult to man even these units with volunteers and especially to develop career NCOs. Military leaders resisted such changes, first exaggerating the costs involved and then falsifying their progress by manipulations such as transferring 1,000 volunteers from the 76th, when it departed Chechnya, to the 42nd and counting those contract soldiers twice. Army leaders tried to maintain the

existing system of conscription, both because it was familiar and because it justified large numbers of officers in cadre or skeleton (Category C) divisions that would absorb reservists upon mobilization. Not until 2007 did President Putin install a civilian, Anatoly Serdyukov, as defense minister with instructions to purge the military of unnecessary officer positions. One part of this effort was to create genuine noncommissioned officers to replace many of the junior officers in troop units. Serdyukov established an NCO training program operated by the VDV in Ryazan, but that program's output was inadequate to meet the needs of the overall force.[7]

Russia also reintroduced some military and physical fitness training into the public schools and eventually revived the Soviet-era DOSAAF military training for students under the title of Russian Defense Sports Technical Organization, but resumed the title DOSAAF. In 2006, the Defense Ministry introduced home mortgage guarantees in an effort to attract and retain more volunteers. The conscription system continued, although it reduced the term of mandatory service from two years to one; that in turn actually doubled the demand for conscripts each year, because every draftee had to be replaced each year, while giving them far less training on active duty.[8]

The reduction in conscripts freed resources to better train career soldiers. However, one overlooked consequence of the shift to volunteers was the gradual decline in numbers of fully trained reservists for the Russian mobilization system. For over a century, Russia and the Soviet Union had relied on a backlog of millions of young men who served on active duty for several years before being transferred—often along with the obsolescent equipment that they had learned to operate and maintain—into the mobilization base. Indeed, this depth of trained manpower was a principal reason why the Red Army was able to absorb and defeat the German invasion of 1941, when the Third Reich had virtually no trained reservists and the USSR had more than 14 million.[9] The absence of such citizen soldiers became glaringly obvious in 2022, when the full-time Russian army needed replacements for its losses in Ukraine.

Tactical Reorganization

While the United States and other Western armed forces standardized on fixed structure brigade-sized units, the Russian army started in the same direction but ended with a different solution. During the 1980s, the Soviet Army (and therefore some of its Warsaw Pact allies' armed forces) had begun to deemphasize the division structure in favor of combined arms brigades directly subordinated to a corps headquarters. The difficulties of mobilizing against Georgia in 2008 (see below), accelerated the change to separate brigades. Regardless of the official structure, the new Russian army eventually arrived at a different

tactical structure, the so-called battalion tactical group (BTG) that had first appeared as a basis for rotating combat units into Afghanistan during the 1980s. The official organization of maneuver regiments, brigades, and divisions remained generally fixed, but shortages of trained soldiers and functioning equipment prompted the Soviet and later Russian commanders to maintain tiered readiness elements within each garrison unit. Upon activation, each brigade or regiment would cannibalize itself into two or occasionally three ad hoc battalion groups for operations in Georgia or (later) Ukraine.

There was considerable variation in task organization. Typically, however, a BTG might include one tank company (T-72, T-80, or T-90), three mechanized infantry companies (BMP-3, BTR-80, or MT-LB), one or more antitank companies, two self-propelled artillery or multiple rocket launcher batteries, two antiaircraft batteries, an engineer company or platoon, plus signal, medical, and logistical support. The BTGs generated by a tank regiment reversed the proportion of tank and mechanized companies.[10] Spetsnaz and other specialized capabilities might also be attached, at least temporarily, to such a tactical group. While this structure had a wealth of tactical capabilities, coordinating it might well exceed the span of control of a typical small Russian staff. The logistical failings of Russian army units invading Ukraine in 2022 hint strongly at major problems in staff planning. Command of a BTG permitted the parent battalion commander to practice combined arms tactics at a low level, although in some instances a more experienced regimental commander or his deputy took command of a BTG.

BTGs were often better trained as they contained only contract soldiers, allowing the units to conduct an annual training program from individual soldier through brigade-level operation. Non-BTG companies were filled with conscripts whose brief terms of service meant they could only train to company-level proficiency, running two cycles of six months each in the course of a year.

Equipment

Motivated personnel can only achieve so much without equipment, and foreign sales of natural gas and petroleum allowed Putin's Russia to make significant investments in armaments. Adjusting for exchange rates, Russia's military budget doubled between 2008 and 2021, rising to more than $250 billion per year. Six hundred aircraft, 840 helicopters, and 2,300 UAVs entered the inventory.[11] Hundreds of multirole fighters, especially the Sukhoi series (Su-30, 34, and 35) were fielded. Variants of the T-72 remained the backbone of Russia's tank fleet, although the T-80 (the first turbine-propelled Russian tank) and other, newer vehicles appeared in limited numbers. The much ballyhooed T-14

Armata, supposedly designed with a variety of sensors, reactive armor, and even stealth technology, proved too expensive and difficult to produce in large numbers.[12]

The fate of the T-14 illustrates a larger set of Russian problems that became prominent during the Ukraine War in 2022: technical difficulties in production were compounded by consistent corruption within the defense industry,[13] although the ability of the armed forces to choose what they purchased may have produced some of the same inefficiencies that annual congressional appropriations cause in the United States. Soviet industry had an established pattern of fudging quality and exaggerating the quantities it produced, and the new oligarchs of Russia used this pattern to profit from the expanded defense budget. In Ukraine, the Russian Air Force quickly expended its inventory of precision-guided munitions and resorted to older, unguided bombs. By November 2022, the Russians were reportedly so short of ammunition that they launched decades-old cruise missiles with the nuclear warheads removed.[14]

The ease with which Russian tactical communications could be intercepted in that conflict confirmed that tactical forces lacked the radio encryption that had been common in the West since the 1980s. Russian aircraft shot down over Ukraine had Western commercial geopositioning equipment taped into the cockpits for lack of government-supplied navigation electronics, and even reactive armor was allegedly replaced by simple blocks of rubber or other dummy materials. Stockpiles of Soviet-era vehicles and supplies had been neglected and cannibalized during the lean years of 1990–2006; in combination with the shortage of reservists, this neglect meant that Russia had limited mobilization capacity. Persistent reports appeared of soldiers seeking "crowd funding" to equip themselves for war, reminiscent of previous conflicts in which some Russian soldiers had sold weapons for cash.[15] Yet, few of these weaknesses had been visible until put to the test by a determined opponent.

Georgia, 2008

Problems of both rearmament and corruption were largely in the future when Russia first flexed its conventional armed forces in August 2008. By way of background, one should note that when Georgia left the dissolving USSR, it contained two regions with mixed ethnicities—Abkhazia in the west, along the Black Sea coast, and South Ossetia on the northern edge of the new state—that were troubled by violence. For a decade, the Russian Federation and Georgia both claimed to keep the peace in the disputed regions, sometimes cooperating at the tactical level. Moscow had consistently opposed interventions in other parts of the world for humanitarian or R2P reasons. Yet in 2008, the Russian government tested what became a frequent pretext for Russian aggression—the

desire to protect ethnic Great Russians from alleged persecution. The fact that the Soviet Union had settled such Russians, sometimes forcibly, amidst other nationalities throughout the USSR meant that Russian minorities were always available to invoke. If nothing else, Putin hoped that appeals to nationalism would gain him domestic supporters, although some of these supporters became frustrated by government delays and incompetence. Then in 2008, the regime of Dmitry Medvedev began issuing Russian passports to Russian minority residents in Ossetia, setting the stage for intervention.[16] (To circumvent the term limit on the Russian presidency, Putin had temporarily traded the presidency for the premiership with Medvedev, but the two worked closely together.)

In reality, Moscow was concerned about much larger issues than possible mistreatment of its nationals inside Georgia. A decade earlier, Operation Allied Force had demonstrated that the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council did not afford Russia any control over NATO military action, even to protect its traditional client, Serbia. Coming at a time when the former superpower was at its weakest and struggling in Chechnya, this crisis prompted an angry withdrawal from Brussels and the bizarre spectacle of Russian forces "sneaking" into Kosovo to preempt KFOR (see chapter 5). More significantly, NATO continued to contemplate an enlargement strategy that seemed to threaten Russian conceptions of security. Having already absorbed the Baltic States—which had ample historical reason to seek collective security against Moscow—by 2008 NATO seemed willing to embrace any of the former republics of the USSR or former Warsaw Pact satellites. In April of that year, a NATO summit in Bucharest entertained delegations from Georgia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Strenuous Russian diplomacy succeeded only in deferring a decision to offer a membership plan to Kyiv and Tbilisi. Then in July, the United States and the Czech Republic reached agreement to locate an antiballistic missile radar in the latter state. Although the United States sought only to create a limited shield against missile threats from Iran, the Russians viewed any ballistic missile defense as an effort to neutralize their own aging nuclear forces, harking back to the unilateral US abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002.[17] America imposing regime change in Iraq and intervening in Libya also concerned Putin. Viewed from Moscow, it was past time to put a stop to Western involvement in Russia's "near abroad."

One month before the confrontation with Georgia, Russian defense forces conducted an exercise named Caucasus 2008 that enabled the headquarters involved to practice the logistics and operations necessary to maneuver in the region. A battalion of Russian railroad troops had also repaired and rehabilitated fifty-four kilometers of railway necessary to supply potential operations in Abkhazia.[18]

Georgia, 2008. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

Before dawn on August 8, Georgia's 3rd and 4th Brigades, augmented with its Interior Ministry troops, began operations against perceived rebels near Tskhinvali, the provincial capital of South Ossetia. Signals intercepts indicated that the Russian military had already begun crossing into the province on the previous evening, suggesting that Georgia may actually have been responding to a foreign invasion. Spetsnaz plus a battalion of paratroopers (probably drawn from the 7th Guards Airborne Division) spearheaded the invasion. They quickly seized the Roki (or Roksky) Tunnel, a Soviet-era project that was the best road connection between North and South Ossetia, although the tunnel reportedly suffered damage during the conflict. Behind this spearhead were various battalion tactical groups drawn from Russian units in the region, with the campaign under the overall command of 58th Army headquarters. These forces moved rapidly to Tskhinvali, where Russian air and ground attacks forced the Georgians to withdraw after three days of fighting. Meanwhile, some 9,000 Russian troops occupied Abkhazia against little opposition. French president Nicolas Sarkozy brokered a ceasefire effective August 12, 2008. The European Union finally pressured Moscow to withdraw most of its troops to

preconflict locations, but the invasion had conveyed a clear warning against Georgia's involvement with NATO. Again foreshadowing its later conduct with Ukraine, Russia recognized South Ossetia and Abkhazia as supposedly independent entities, splitting them away from Georgian rule.[19] Understandably cowed, the Georgian government became pro-Russian.[20]

Despite the appearance of overwhelming force, the Russian armed forces had difficulty meeting the challenge of even a limited war. Having pressured Col. Gen. Aleksandr Rukshin, who had opposed changes in defense structure, to retire as head of the Main Operational Direction in the Defense Ministry, the Moscow government then had to recall him to active duty to manage the sudden deployment. Only the airborne units were ready for immediate deployment. The two nearest motorized rifle regiments took longer to alert and travel a short distance to Ossetia than did the airborne units from elsewhere, while Russian command, control, communications, and electronic warfare systems all proved deficient. There were few night vision devices or protective vests in stock, and most of the available tanks were obsolescent T-62s and T-72s whose armor did not fare well against Western-supplied antitank weapons.[21]

The Georgian conflict provided ample evidence to accelerate the conversion of the Russian army from a mass mobilization system to a smaller, more deployable active-duty force. With a few exceptions—including the airborne divisions plus a fortress machine gun–artillery division in the Kuril Islands—most Russian divisions of whatever category were replaced by eighty-three large (4,500–5,000 soldiers each) separate brigades that included organic service support, similar to those formed in the United States a few years earlier. All these brigades were expected to leave their garrisons within one hour of notification. By December 2009, four strategic commands (West, East, South, and Central) replaced the more numerous military districts; each strategic command was to have a joint "operational command" headquarters (including air, army, Interior Ministry, and Border Guard troops) underneath it to direct operations. These new headquarters were far from trained to conduct joint operations, of course; it would take years to change the Russian military command culture and train staff officers in contingency operations. A massive exercise, Vostok 2010, tested the ability of the East Strategic Command to respond to a Chinese invasion; the exercise included redeploying fighter squadrons and airlifting a motorized rifle brigade to Siberia as well as simulating nuclear demolitions and SS-21 missiles against the invader.[22]

This shift in structure may not have been permanent or complete, as more traditional Russian/Soviet concepts of mechanized "deep battle" began to reappear after 2010. Russia moved to reestablish operational headquarters such as the 1st Guards Tank (Moscow) and 20th Combined Arms (Voronezh) Armies.

This same trend included several heavy divisions, rather than brigades, in the West Strategic Command, including the 18th Motorized Rifle Division from Kaliningrad, which used the four-regiment Soviet paradigm.[23]

The Gray Zone

While the tactics employed in the Russian-Georgian conflict were relatively conventional, its sudden onset suggests that it may have been an early example of what has since become known as a gray zone or hybrid conflict. The Russian government and military commanders, perhaps influenced by their perception of Western special operations during the Cold War, appeared to believe that they were in a constant if unacknowledged state of war with the United States and NATO.[24] From this viewpoint evolved the concept that is sometimes erroneously termed the Gerasimov Doctrine, referring to a 2013 speech by the Russian chief of the general staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov. Having trained as an armored officer in the Soviet Army, Gerasimov articulated the concept that modern warfare need not be openly declared but rather may involve a variety of actions including economic, espionage, cyber, and unconventional operations by deniable or special forces. Such attacks, like those conducted by some Serbs in former Yugoslavia, seek to operate in the gray area between peace and open, declared warfare coercing an opponent without posing a clear, existential threat that could lead to fully mobilized war. In effect, Russia (and probably China as well) tried to remain below the thresholds that might trigger a response based on Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty or the United Nations Charter.[25] These ambiguous attacks, designed to forcibly change the post–Cold War order in Europe, profited originally from Western disbelief that Russia would conduct such aggression. The existence of nuclear weapons tended to raise the threshold of perceived conflict and make Western responses more hesitant, since open conflict with Russia could easily escalate into a strategic missile exchange.

Some analysts have suggested that the gray zone approach is an updated version of Soviet deep operations. Using cyber and information warfare as well as deniable special operations, Moscow hoped to avoid open, frontal contact with its opponents, leaving the Russian state geographically and diplomatically removed from the conflict it had initiated. Soviet-era techniques such as maskirovka (combined deception and camouflage), agitation propaganda, and radio-electronic combat could be folded in under this approach.[26]

Russia developed specialized capabilities to implement this strategy. The GRU already offered a variety of options, ranging from foreign assassinations to special operations to cyber warfare. Vladimir Putin employed one of his confidants, restaurateur Yevgeny Prigozhin, to develop deniable operations.

Prigozhin infamously created the Internet Research Agency and associated hacking groups that attempted to manipulate American public perceptions during the 2016 elections.[27] Prigozhin was also responsible for forming the Wagner Group of nongovernmental special warfare operators, a purportedly private military company in a country that outlawed such organizations.[28]

Dimitry Utkin, a former lieutenant colonel in the GRU's Spetsnaz, at one time used the call sign "Wagner," from which the group got its name. After an abortive 2013 attempt to form a private military company called "Slavonic Corps," Utkin became the head of the GRU-linked Wagner Group in 2014 when it operated in eastern Ukraine (see below). Large salaries recruited adventurers from among former Spetsnaz and police officers, as well as convicted criminals, with up to 2,000 members supporting the Assad government during the Syrian civil war. It also provided bodyguards and paramilitary hit teams in numerous African states, especially the Central African Republic (CAR). When its manpower ran short in 2022, the Wagner Group reportedly recruited local rebel prisoners in the CAR to flesh out its ranks in Ukraine.[29]

The Wagner Group was ruthless but by no means invincible. On February 7, 2018, UAVs and other sources indicated that a mixture of Wagner and Syrian government forces, including a number of T-72s and armored personnel carriers, had massed to attack US and Kurdish forces near Khasham, Syria, on the Euphrates River. Unconfirmed reports suggested that Prigozhin hoped to use this force to take control of the nearby Conoco oil fields. That evening, US Defense Secretary Mattis reportedly contacted his Russian counterpart, who claimed that this group was not Russian. When the Syrian/Russian force continued to advance, it was struck by not only UAV missiles and Marine Corps artillery fire but also ordnance delivered by F-22, F-15E, AC-130, B-52, and AH-64 aircraft. At least sixty-eight and perhaps more than a hundred Syrians and Russians died in the abortive attack.[30] These casualties reflect another advantage that the Moscow government found in the Wagner Group—a reduction in official Russian losses because Wagner's actions were diplomatically deniable.

Ukraine I: Crimea

Ukraine was the setting for the first significant trials of the gray zone strategy and the new tools to implement it. Under President Victor Yanukovych, who had taken office in 2010, Ukraine appeared to be moving in the direction of a customs union and perhaps even closer relations with Russia. His country was already troubled by the same types of corruption and oligarchic mismanagement as Russia. Yanukovych had opposed NATO and European Union membership and appeared to be safely in the Russian orbit. Beginning in late

2013, however, the Yanukovych regime violently repressed public demonstrations (known as Euromaidan) in favor of the EU, but ultimately the president was forced to flee in February 2014. The new government promptly dissolved a repressive Interior Ministry police unit and began negotiations with the EU. Putin applied his usual preconceptions to the situation, convinced that the United States had somehow fomented a revolt that did not represent public opinion, so he proclaimed the resulting government illegitimate.[31] In fairness, one must acknowledge that the newly empowered rebels in Ukraine sought to restrict the use of the Russian language while trying to force older-style bureaucrats out of office.[32]

Not only did Putin's regime fear similar public uprisings within Russia, but Moscow wanted to keep Ukraine out of the West's orbit. Most pressingly, the Russian government was concerned about the future of the historically Russian Crimean Peninsula, an area of mixed Russian (58 percent), Ukrainian (24 percent), and Tatar (12 percent) population that housed a principal base of the Russian navy but had been administratively attached to Ukraine.[33] Given his misperceptions of the causes for popular uprisings, the Russian strongman had no hesitation in applying gray zone tactics to take back key parts of Ukraine. Following pro-Russian demonstrations in Crimea, on February 27, 2014, unidentified "little green men"—almost certainly Spetsnaz, Naval Infantry, and VDV with their insignia removed—infiltrated the peninsula by surprise and took it over bloodlessly.[34] For six weeks, Moscow denied any Russian involvement, but eventually Putin admitted that "Russian servicemen did back the [imaginary] Crimean self-defense forces."[35] A pro-Russian government and referendum followed, and on March 17 Putin signed an executive order recognizing the Republic of Crimea, de facto merging it with the Russian Federation.[36] Western economic sanctions failed to reverse this usurpation.

Putin and his foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, made repeated references to the possibility of using nuclear weapons if threatened, meanwhile ostentatiously announcing improvements to Russia's Strategic Rocket Forces. In 2014, NATO fighters intercepted more than four hundred Russian military aircraft entering Western airspace, returning to Cold War levels. Massive exercises involving Strategic Rocket Forces, nuclear-armed submarines, and cruise missiles occurred in 2014–15. The stress placed on the Russian Air Force is suggested by two crashes of TU-95 bombers in June and July 2015, respectively. In response, USAF B-2 and B-52 aircraft conducted several deployments to the United Kingdom and flights over the Arctic, reprising the fail-safe confrontations of the Cold War.[37]

Before, during, and after each Russian encroachment on Ukraine, Russia's information warfare activities targeted public opinion in both Ukraine and the West. Ukrainian corruption became a method for sowing doubt in the

Ukraine. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

legitimacy of the democratic regime, while in the United States Russian cyber manipulation encouraged political groups to criticize pro-Ukrainian policies while delegitimizing the very concept of objective truth, an attack encapsulated in the facile term "fake news."[38]

Ukraine II: The Donbas

In contrast to the international condemnation and sanctions, Russian domestic opinion generally hailed Putin's actions, prompting him to focus on two other oblasts (administrative divisions), Donetsk and Luhansk, located in southeastern Ukraine. He declared both areas to be historically Russian, reflecting czarist and Soviet industrial investment there.[39] In March, public protests began in the two areas; the presence of outside Russian agitators in the crowds was highlighted when, on April 7, 2014, someone who had helped seize the Kharkiv opera house mistakenly announced that he had occupied city hall![40] After a hasty plebiscite, in May the two breakaway "people's republics" declared themselves to be a confederation known as Novorossiya (New Russia).[41]

A variety of different militias and paramilitary groups formed in the two rebellious areas, including those associated with Eastern Orthodox believers, Cossacks, and others; some of these militias received Russian weapons and aid. In addition to Wagner Group mercenaries, at least two militia leaders were former Russian officers apparently acting on Moscow's behalf. Retired GRU colonel Sergei Petrovsky led the so-called Vostok (East) Brigade with weapons provided by the Russian FSB until he fled to Russia after an attempted assassination. Igor Girkin (aka Strelkov) was reportedly a former Russian artillery officer who had been involved in the Crimean takeover before resurfacing in the "Donetsk People's Republic." There, he was briefly the commander in chief before returning to Russia, reportedly at Putin's insistence. Moscow dismissed reports of active-duty Russian soldiers in the two areas as "holiday makers" on leave from their units, the twenty-first-century equivalent of Chinese "volunteers" in Korea.[42]

Russian involvement became even greater when Ukrainian conventional and special operations troops advanced eastward beginning in April 2015 to conduct an "antiterrorism operation" against the separatists. The Ukrainian army had long been starved of resources for equipment and training, but now it began to succeed. By August, as the Ukrainian sweep approached the eastern borders, it encountered formed brigades of the Russian army as well as Russian commanders of local militias and a group of locals who had undergone military training in Russia for four months. Ukrainian forces captured and interrogated Russian soldiers from the 331st Guards Airborne Regiment as well as 31st Guards Air Assault Brigade, 9th Motorized Rifle Brigade, and other units. Digital photographs of Russian equipment and soldiers were geolocated both within Ukraine and along the Russian border, while a Russian court inadvertently confirmed the presence of Russian troops in the disputed areas.[43] Moscow returned the dead bodies of hundreds of Russian soldiers to their families under the Afghanistan-era cover term "Cargo 200." Yet, until December 2015 the Putin government consistently denied that the Russian military was involved in eastern Ukraine and thereafter downplayed the scale of this presence.

Repeated ceasefires negotiated at Minsk failed to hold, often because of renewed Russian attacks. An uneasy stalemate settled over the battlefield after months of inconclusive fighting. Meanwhile, Moscow found itself not only bankrolling the military campaign but also paying for governmental costs, including 640,000 retirement pensions.[44] Post-Crimea sanctions cost Russia an estimated 147 billion roubles ($4.5 billion) and contributed to a 17 percent inflation rate.[45] Putin's gray zone deniable operations were neither profitable nor rapidly resolved.

Malaysian Airlines Flight 17

The diplomatic disaster caused by Russian aggression against Ukraine became worse on July 17, 2014. Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, en route from Kuala Lumpur to Amsterdam, was shot down over Ukraine, killing all 298 people on board. Because of military air combat over the rebellious oblasts, the government of Ukraine had closed its airspace below 32,000 feet as a precautionary measure; MH17 was flying 1,000 feet higher. Among the late-model weapons systems that Moscow had transferred to separatist control was the 9K37 Buk (NATO designation SA-11 Gadfly). With no apparent effort to identify the Boeing 777 aircraft that appeared on radar screens, separatists shot it down. Russia refused to cooperate in investigations, making various improbable allegations concerning Ukrainian responsibility. Open-source analysts traced the launcher from the Russian 53rd Air Defense Missile Brigade to its deployment in Ukraine and helped identify the separatist commanders responsible. In November 2022, a Dutch court convicted Igor Girkin and two others in absentia.[46]

Interlude in Azerbaijan

A brief detour to Azerbaijan is necessary at this point. Not only did the Second Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict (September 27–November 10, 2020) occur in the midst of Russian escalation against Ukraine, but the tactics of that conflict and especially the use of unmanned aerial vehicles that reappeared in Ukraine. Azerbaijan's campaign to regain the disputed province of Nagorno-Karabakh from its Armenian occupants gave evidence that the reconnaissance-strike complex, first foreseen by Soviet theorists during the 1980s, had finally come to fruition, this time with UAVs in both roles.

With Russian training and advice, the Azerbaijanis began by launching sixty aging AN-2 biplanes, converted to unmanned flying bombs, against the breakaway, ethnically Armenian provinces. Although the defenders destroyed most of this first wave of attackers, that effort distracted the Armenians and revealed their air defense positions, which were then eliminated or suppressed by the Turkish-designed TB-2 Bayraktar (Standard Bearer). With a range of 150 kilometers and four hard points for laser-guided weapons, the Bayraktar quickly became the gold standard for tactical UAVs. After the first aerial battles, Azerbaijani special operations forces infiltrated the town of Shusha. Assisted by TB-2s overhead to locate and attack the defenders, these infiltrators so demoralized the Armenians that they abandoned the town, with many being killed during their retreat. After three decades of de facto Armenian independence in the enclave, the combination of UAVs and special operators had regained the breakaway provinces in six weeks. The UAVs involved were less lethal

Nagorno-Karabakh. Map by Erin Greb Cartography.

than some believed, but this conflict certainly elevated them from monitors of terrorism to integrated instruments of war.[47] The threat of difficult-to-detect UAVs had an adverse psychological effect on defenders, and Russia gave the appearance of being a leading competitor in the field of UAVs. UAVs were still active in September 1923, when a final Azerbaijani attack drove the remaining Armenians to evacuate the beleaguered enclave, retreating into Armenia.[48]

Blundering into Open Warfare

Putin's relatively easy successes in Crimea and the Donbas apparently reinforced his belief that Ukraine was not an actual nation that could or would significantly resist a Russian takeover. At a minimum, he sought to dismember

Ukraine by seizing a land bridge, along the Sea of Azov, to connect the Russian Federation to Crimea. At the end of 2021, the Russian armed forces—including as many as sixty-five battalion tactical groups, from as far away as the 155th Guards Naval Infantry Brigade in Vladivostok[49] and the 11th Army Corps in Kaliningrad—concentrated both east of Ukraine and in Belarus to the north, where they conducted a major exercise that was apparently intended not only to prepare the troops but also to rattle sabers.

This time, however, the situation was distinctly different than it had been in Putin's previous gray zone operations, and not solely because his aim was to conquer rather than dismember Ukraine. First, the previous two operations had warned many observers, both in Ukraine and the West, that Russia intended further encroachments. In addition to significant Ukrainian military preparations with Western assistance, much of the populace began to equip and train itself as territorial light infantry, advised in some cases by American combat veterans volunteering their time. YouTube videos publicly announced these training activities, but apparently Russian intelligence was unable to convince Putin that he now faced an aroused and prepared population, not an apathetic and divided opponent. Second, any chance of strategic surprise disappeared when the United States and other foreign states publicized the Russian troop concentrations and warned against further aggression. The Ukrainian government demurred about this warning, perhaps fearing to disrupt its own economy,[50] and the NATO nations clearly wished to avoid the risks of open warfare, but the strategic surprise of 2014 was gone. Moreover, Western warnings of coming false-flag attacks discredited Russian efforts to blame the ensuing conflict on Ukrainian insurgents.

The third critical difference lay in the field of logistics. Infiltrating small numbers of highly trained special operators into a small area was a far simpler task than supplying a large mechanized force to conquer a land mass of 233,000 square miles (in excess of 600,000 sq km). Russia has always been hamstrung by geography when it attempted to project and sustain military power beyond its borders. Since the late 1800s, its military had relied on a robust rail network to partially alleviate this logistical weakness, but that rail network constituted its own vulnerability. Anticipating the new offensive, the Ukrainian government planned and executed the deliberate destruction of all railroad crossings along its eastern and northern borders, forcing Russia to rely on insufficient truck transportation to refuel and resupply the invasion. The defenders also cratered some vehicular bridges leading into the country. Russia was able to divert some of its rail traffic through Belarus, but even these routes were reportedly sabotaged by sympathetic rail workers. Overall, Russia's logistical framework proved inadequate to support a complex war of power projection.[51]

On February 21, 2022, Putin telegraphed the imminence of war by recognizing the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics and moved more Russian troops into the separatist areas, probably intending to blame Ukraine for any resulting conflict. Putin's announcement provoked American sanctions against the two breakaway areas, but the Russian government had concluded that it could survive and defy sanctions.[52]

Despite the tactical surprise of the initial attack, the Ukrainians had more advance notice than the invading Russian troops, who for security reasons did not receive warning orders until twenty-four hours prior to the invasion. As a result, the invaders lacked current maps, ammunition, fuel, food, and communications.[53]

The Russian invasion of February 24, 2022, was designed to follow longstanding Russian and Soviet doctrine, but it failed in the execution. VDV troops, probably from the 331st Guards Airborne Brigade, conducted a helicopter assault to seize the Antonov Airport near Hostomel, just west of Kyiv. The invaders apparently intended to airland larger forces once the field was secured and runway obstacles had been cleared away. Although the attackers were initially successful, they were unable to expand their bridgehead. Ukrainian special forces ambushed an attempt to move off the airport, and later the Ukrainian 72nd Mechanized Brigade and territorial infantry units reportedly pushed the invaders off the airfield, after which Ukrainian artillery cratered the field to impede airlanding of a larger force. Although the Russian air force supported the initial insertion, thereafter Ukrainian pilots were more in evidence, further hampering the invaders.[54] Ground forces advancing south from Belarus linked up with and relieved the airborne element, but the opportunity to disorganize the defenders and airland large reinforcements had passed. In a less ambitious attempt, Russian VDV landed near Kharkiv on March 2 to assist 1st Guards Tank Army in clearing that major urban area.[55]

These airborne insertions and some limited air attacks were the "deep battle" aspects of the principal Russian plan, a traditional, high-speed mechanized approach from the north and east, each thrust using the mobilized elements of two combined arms armies. Meanwhile, 8th Combined Arms Army controlled the separatist forces seeking to occupy all of Donetsk (especially the contested port city of Mariupol) and Luhansk. Spetsnaz and Wagner Group elements reportedly infiltrated Kyiv and other major cities, seeking to assassinate senior leaders and disrupt Ukrainian defenses, but had little success against alerted defenders. Secondary Russian attacks advanced northeastward from Crimea and southwestward from Donetsk through Kherson and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts, respectively, seeking to build a solid land corridor from Russia to Crimea along the Sea of Azov. Unlike scripted peacetime exercises, the Russian armed forces

found themselves delayed and weakened at every turn by unexpected and unpredictable defenders.

Except for the Sea of Azov axis, this maneuver plan resembled a mirror image of the German invasion of Ukraine in 1941. In each case, the railroads were unavailable to the invaders, who consumed large quantities of fuel. For speed and fuel economy, the Russians tried to remain on the few paved roads, but in 2022 they found themselves beset by numerous light infantry forces armed with Western antitank weapons.

Countering such irregulars required significant quantities of dismounted infantry and air reconnaissance, neither of which were readily available in 2022. When they tried to maneuver off the few paved roads, the invaders encountered one of the region's more famous climatic phenomena: the muddy season, or *rasputitsa* (the Ukrainian term is *bezdorizhzhia*, "roadlessness").[56] For several months each spring and fall, the sodden soil is often impassable; as a result, at best the invaders consumed scarce fuel supplies at a ferocious rate. As reflected in scores of videos, they became mired and abandoned their vehicles, which were often towed off by Ukrainian farm tractors for use by the defenders.

In this context, Ukrainian UAVs proved significant, not just for what they destroyed but also for the demoralizing sense that any Russian invader might be struck at any time. Stalled, roadbound columns made easy targets. To further this uneasiness, Bayraktars received movie-star coverage as they rocketed not just tactical vehicles but railroad tank cars filled with fuel.[57] Commercially manufactured UAVs, equipped with improvised bombs or used solely for surveillance, expanded the Ukrainian reach; not until a year later did Russia learn to use its own UAVs to reconnoiter for antitank ambushes.[58] When the Russian armed forces' initial invasion failed, they turned to terror attacks on population centers and utilities. In defense, Ukrainian UAVs as well as long-range, American-supplied artillery pieces blew up a number of Russian supply dumps where ammunition was often stacked, without sandbags or other precautions, near railroad sidings.[59] On December 2–3, 2022, more capable UAVs reportedly struck three Russian air bases, including TU-22 and TU-95 bomber bases, deep inside Russian Federation territory, although Moscow denied the reports.[60] At sea, Ukraine used both UAVs and uncrewed surface vessels (USVs)—or possibly homegrown PGM missiles—to attack Russian warships such as the cruiser *Moskva*.[61] In early 2023, Moscow retaliated by launching volleys of Iranian-designed Shahed-136 drones to maximize casualties in Ukrainian cities.[62] Such attacks recurred throughout the remaining winter, forcing Ukraine to use up scarce air defense assets.

Ukraine's conventional forces proved equally effective against the invaders. The Ukrainian 1st Tank Brigade, equipped with T-64B tanks and digital radios,

was not caught in the initial bombardment, having dispersed into the countryside north of Kyiv. Lacking organic infantry, it cooperated with local territorial volunteers to set up ambushes. Unable to defeat this brigade, the Russian 41st Combined Arms Army bypassed it and continued on to the capital but lacked the situational awareness to realize that a single minor road remained open to resupply the Ukrainians behind the Russian advance. Severely attritted, 1st Tank Brigade survived to refit and continue the conflict.[63]

After the first lunge failed to encircle and starve Kyiv, the invaders had to withdraw in some places while they continued to seek a land bridge from Crimea to Donetsk. The Ukrainian forces began carefully planned counteroffensives, slowly clearing some occupied areas of northeastern and eastern Ukraine, including much territory in the separatist "republics." Russian missile and artillery attacks were increasingly divorced from tactical objectives, apparently seeking to terrorize or demoralize Ukrainian civilians by shelling population centers and utility infrastructure. Anxious to avoid escalation, Western nations had initially provided Ukraine with artillery systems having only limited range, but the persistent Russian terror attacks prompted Washington to release more capable counterstrike weapons such as the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS).[64]

In contrast to Russian difficulties with communications and geopositioning, Ukraine benefited from the largesse of Elon Musk's SpaceX venture. When the Ukrainian minister of digital transformation appealed for help to restore cell phones after the invasion, SpaceX launched dozens of small, low-orbital Starlink satellites that vastly improved Ukrainian communications and allowed individual soldiers to uplink photographs for prompt targeting.[65] Musk eventually lamented the high cost of providing Starlink for Ukraine and began limiting his support, but as a demonstration it may well inspire other military forces to contract for similar wartime support. More recently, Musk reportedly limited Starlink so that the Ukrainian forces could not use them to liberate Ukrainian areas claimed by Russia.[66]

Both Russia and the West quickly depleted supplies of high technology weapons, especially air-defense, antitank, and precision-guided munitions. They faced serious challenges in restocking, although the United States has announced plans to greatly increase production of longer-range artillery and ATACMS ballistic missiles.[67] Sanctions on the importation of electronic components exacerbated Russian production problems for tanks, but Pyongyang, which has both stockpiles and production tools for older-model Soviet weapons, promised to sell ammunition to Moscow.[68] Russia refurbished an estimated eight hundred T-62 tanks to resume offensive operations in early 2023.[69] Finally, Moscow resurrected its previous expertise in electronic warfare

(also known as radio-electronic combat): by the fall of 2023, Russian jamming reportedly disrupted the effects of Ukrainian Excalibur artillery shells, JDAM guided bombs, HIMARS rockets, and in some instances UAVs.[70]

Russia had traditionally relied on massive artillery strikes for shock and destructive power, but ammunition shortages significantly hampered such efforts in Ukraine. Russian commanders used various techniques, such as improvised mortar platoons to support maneuver forces as well as UAVs to achieve greater effectiveness with fewer rounds fired. Despite such innovations, Russian armed forces often lacked tactical fire support.[71] By December 29, 2023, media reports indicated more than 40,000 Russian casualties in the war, including 4,915 new recruits; actual losses may have been 20 percent higher.[72]

Running short of trained manpower, Moscow announced a partial mobilization in September 2022, but the results were disappointing in terms of numbers, motivation, and training.[73] Anecdotally, Russia appeared hard-pressed to find even uniforms and personal equipment for the new recruits, whereas the United States and NATO provided a flood of such materiel to the defenders. Syrians, Chechens, and Wagner recruits had to substitute for Russian soldiers, with the Chechens possibly performing blocking tasks to prevent retreat and desertion on the battlefield.

In December 2022, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Kuzhugetovich Shoigu proposed the formation of two additional air assault divisions for VDV plus at least three additional motorized rifle divisions. In January 2023, Shoigu announced that Putin had authorized a further expansion of the Russian military from 1.35 to 1.5 million soldiers, sufficient to man the additional divisions, but even this announcement spoke of implementing the expansion over three years.[74] Having lost much of its volunteer force, Moscow may well find it difficult to train and equip sufficient soldiers and leaders for the new units.

By contrast, the Wagner Group suffered so heavily in the attritional struggles for eastern Ukraine during early 2023 that Yevgeny Prigozhin sought to withdraw his decimated troops and refocus on Africa.[75] Complaining bitterly that the regular Russian military denied him ammunition, in June 2023 Prigozhin withdrew some of the Wagner troops from Ukraine and advanced to Voronezh and Rostov-on-Don, claiming he would eliminate the Russian military command.[76] Prigozhin was as surprised as the Russian government by the success of this gambit; he apparently recognized that he had overstretched himself and went into exile before conveniently (for Putin) dying in a plane crash.

At the tactical level, the enormous casualty toll of bitter fighting during the winter of 2022–23 reportedly prompted Russian commanders to abandon, at least temporarily, the BTG solution in favor of returning to divisions and

separate brigades, which are better equipped to sustain combat involving heavy losses.[77] Yet, as most Western armies know, the division/ brigade structure increases the potential for misunderstanding because purely tank or rifle units may be less accustomed to working with the other combat arms.

After a winter of bitter fighting in which each side sought to bleed the other dry, in June 2023 Ukrainian forces launched a series of counterattacks, slowly attempting to retake lost territory in the areas previously seized by Moscow. Especially costly combat occurred in the Bakhmut area near Donetsk. In November, the Russian army launched armored counterattacks to pinch off the Ukrainian outpost of Avdiivka, some thirty-three miles (49 km) south of Bakhmut. After numerous failures, the Russians finally wore down the defenders and captured the town in February 2024.[78]

In sheer numerical terms, Russia may still win the attritional warfare that began in the fall of 2022, but the outcome depends on motivation as well as capabilities. Putin's government must maintain control of its population and defense forces. Short of total Ukrainian annihilation, the ongoing Russian terror attacks are likely to sustain Ukrainian determination over a long period, yet conscription became increasingly unpopular on both sides. Yet Ukraine's ability to resist was jeopardized by US congressional reluctance from 2023 onward to continue arming Ukraine.

Moreover, even if Russia ultimately conquers Ukraine, Putin's state will be significantly weaker strategically. The brief 2008 struggle in Ossetia had staked out Moscow's desired sphere of influence. That operation strongly discouraged NATO from further expansion into Georgia or Ukraine, both of which remained as buffer states around Russia. By late 2022, Mr. Putin's excessive ambition had not only caused enormous suffering and destruction but also weakened Russia's strategic position. After decades of holding NATO at arm's length, France became more active in the alliance's security actions in eastern Europe, regularly taking its part to provide air and ground forces in the region.[79] As a neighboring state, Poland drew the obvious lesson concerning the threat posed by Moscow; Warsaw not only transferred weapons to Ukraine but undertook a major rearmament, buying American weaponry and ordering 1,000 K2 tanks, 672 K9 self-propelled howitzers, and 48 FA-50 fighter jets from South Korea.[80] Apart from growing dissatisfaction by the Russian population, the Ukraine conflict inflicted long-term damage on the Russian armed forces and economy so painstakingly developed over the preceding two decades. Of equal if not greater significance, the Russian invasion had motivated existing members of NATO to rearm themselves while encouraging neutral states such as Sweden and Finland to seek NATO membership

against Russian aggression. That membership was delayed briefly by Turkey's continuing preoccupation with the Kurds and therefore with states such as Sweden that refuse to extradite suspects, but at the end of the Ukrainian conflict Moscow is likely to face the type of hostile, unified Europe that it had feared for three decades.

Conclusion

The end of the Cold War may be dated conveniently to the dissolution of the Soviet Union on December 26, 1991. Still, it is difficult to fix the starting date or event of the post–Cold War era that President George H. W. Bush described as the "New World Order." By contrast, the eras after the Napoleonic Wars and after the two World Wars can be dated rather precisely in terms of military armistices and, perhaps more significantly, by peace conferences of the victors in Vienna, Paris, and Potsdam. The Cold War ended without any significant effort to define the world and the power structures that would follow, so it is unsurprising that different groups encountered frustration when pursuing divergent objectives. That divergence makes it difficult if not impossible to sum up this current volume.

While the USSR was still imploding, the United States and its partners used the weapons, doctrine, and training they had constructed during the 1980s to achieve stunning victories in Panama and Iraq. Ensuing American administrations reached two contradictory conclusions on the basis of those 1989–91 victories: as the sole remaining superpower, the United States was obligated to use its power to halt aggression, suffering, and oppression worldwide, yet simultaneously the surviving superpower could reduce its financial and manpower investment in defense and intelligence (the short-lived "peace dividend"). By contrast, competitors and potential adversaries of the West ranging from Iran, Hezbollah, and al-Qaeda to the Russian Federation apparently concluded that they could avoid or at least defer conventional conflict with the superior Western forces, choosing instead to use the poor man's weapons of terror bombing, genocide, and protracted insurgency to demoralize their opponents and achieve their goals. The advent of "Gray Zone" or liminal operations was a logical consequence of these unconventional approaches to achieve their goals.

In a global game of Whack-a-Mole, successive American administrations overextended their limited military forces, not to mention the forces of their

European partners, in pursuit of admirable goals that included providing humanitarian relief for Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia, throttling terrorist groups, and nurturing pluralistic democracies in the infertile soil of Iraq and Afghanistan. Special operations forces were stretched even farther, deploying to advise local forces against terrorists in Africa, the Philippines, and elsewhere. The technological marvels of precision-guided munitions, unmanned aerial vehicles, and networked information sharing could win any conventional fight and overthrow any regime but still fail to gain local support or root out terror and aggression.

In retrospect, in fact, the successful "air campaigns" against Iraq and Former Yugoslavia always included a ground component to coerce the opponent. Yet, American administrations were so determined to prevent another Vietnamese quagmire that they tried to avoid large, long-term troop commitments for "nation building," attempting to accomplish their complex objectives without, in most instances, investing sufficient forces and patience to protect and nurture order and representative democracy. In Lebanon, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, political leaders attempted to substitute precision-guided aerial weapons for boots on the ground, only to find that PGMs produced more civilian casualties and fewer policy successes than the slow, costly, and uncertain process of population-centric counterinsurgency. Once forced, reluctantly, to deploy scarce ground troops, Washington frequently failed to coordinate fully with NATO and other allies who, while willing to provide their share of soldiers, understandably had their own national interests and casualty concerns, expressed in national "caveats" on the use of those troops. Moreover, establishing democratic societies, the rule of law, and protection for minorities required not just combat troops but also police trainers, civil affairs experts, and business advisers who were attuned to local languages and cultures. In the absence of such enablers, the net result of trying to eliminate unsavory regimes and widespread suffering was to undo much of the psychological healing achieved in the decades that followed Vietnam.

Thirty years after the dual triumphs of ending the Cold War and freeing Kuwait, America found itself once again, as in 1975, avoiding overseas commitments while attempting to restore its worn-out weapons and experienced but tired combat veterans. Seeing that American malaise, Iranian and Russian adversaries as well as shortsighted Turkish allies and Iraqi politicians felt free to pursue their own definitions of national power and security, only to unleash further troubles on the world.

Other states in Europe and Africa grew leery of committing troops to what they had believed to be low-risk peacekeeping, only to find their soldiers suffering heavy casualties from ungrateful populaces that instinctively resisted

any foreign occupation or changes in local culture. Too many rabble rousers and would-be aggressors found it easy to gain popular support by appealing to local prejudices and fears. Under such circumstances, well-trained troops, like the Dutch at Srebrenica, sometimes faced the choice between disarmament and capture or violating rules of engagement in a manner that unavoidably produced bystander casualties.

One formulation of Newton's Third Law of Motion is that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. The history of warfare supports a parallel observation to the effect that any temporary advantage in tactics or technology provokes methods for the opposing side to neutralize that advantage. During World War I, for example, the firepower of artillery and machine guns halted military maneuver until the attacker orchestrated his own combination of infiltrating infantry with artillery, tanks, air reconnaissance, staff planning, and communications that could overwhelm the defender. Similarly, at the end of the Cold War, the West and especially the American military had developed a complex of advantages (including all-source intelligence collection and analysis, shared situational awareness, mechanized ground and air assault maneuver, and PGMs) that seemed able to overcome the defensive capabilities of larger (and sometimes more combat experienced) forces such as those of Iraq. As remarked before, the poor man's solution to these advantages was a combination of insurgency and terror/suicide attacks. In the Russian and Iranian-Hezbollah cases, this meant exploiting the ambiguities of aggression on the ill-defined boundary between peace in war. Meanwhile, technologically advanced states developed new devices, such as the Javelin antitank missile and the armed UAV, that could exploit the weaknesses of conventional mechanized forces, especially when (as in the Russian case) those mechanized forces were hampered by poor training and inadequate logistics. In turn, such new weapons will undoubtedly provoke their own countermeasures, but in the interim the "decisive" military marvels of 1989–2003 have lost much of their luster. The attacker must win *decisively* in the first, overwhelming onslaught or find himself involved in an indecisive and prolonged struggle whether in Afghanistan or Ukraine. For Americans and others who prefer to substitute technology for human casualties and are understandably reluctant to cause the suffering of innocents, we appear to have entered another era, like that of 1915, where for different reasons the defender's advantages outweigh those of most attackers. If nothing else, the experience of Afghanistan and Iraq reinforces the wisdom of the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine that investing maximum, *not* minimum, military force quickly is the best, albeit imperfect, guarantor of avoiding prolonged, attritional warfare.

The rapid development of unmanned vehicles continues to offer military options in the gray zone below the level of overt warfare. In late January 2023, for example, three unmanned quadcopters attacked a munitions plant near Isfahan in west-central Iran. This probably represented an Israeli attempt to retard Iranian development of long-range missiles, but it was also another demonstration of the potential of UAVs.[1]

For the Department of Defense, operations during the past three decades required commanders, staffs, and civilian policymakers who understood both the value of the Intelligence Community and the doctrine, strengths, and weaknesses of the different armed services and how those services interact most effectively. Particularly in Panama, Somalia, and Haiti, shortfalls in such "jointness," compounded by interallied misunderstandings, made complicated military efforts even more so, resulting in unnecessary friction and even loss of life. Understandable but sometimes misplaced concerns about operational security often prompted special operators, whether Special Forces in Panama or the SEALs in Operation Anaconda, to risk fratricide by failing to inform conventional forces of their movements. Over the course of the "War on Terror," the military if not their civilian masters gained much greater experience and facility in joint operations. With the temporary end of active hostilities, this jointness may well decline as officers spend more time in the "stovepipes" of their respective services; creation of a separate Space Force, albeit based heavily on the US Air Force, has the potential to further increase the issues of interservice understanding and coordination.

Military force is an essential instrument of policy, but it cannot perform miracles if wielded by uninformed masters trying to resolve ill-defined situations at minimal risk. Modern armed forces provided with networked command and control structures, precision-guided weapons, UAVs, and other marvels of modern warfare can achieve tactical victories, but, as General Powell and other veterans of Vietnam could have predicted, only if those armed forces have clearly defined enemies and objectives while they are directed by a government that affords them sufficient combat power and popular support. If, instead, that government deploys military force without a clear conception of what it can and should do as well as what it can*not* do, the result may well be another Vietnam or Afghanistan. That, in turn, only encourages the aggressors of the world and leads to more suffering.

Notes

Preface

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Chapter 1

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39. Yates, *Military Intervention in Panama: Operation Just Cause*, 259–71.
40. Woodward, *Commanders*, 149–50, 172.
41. Yates, *Military Intervention in Panama: Operation Just Cause*, 70–71.
42. Quoted in Woodward, *Commanders*, 171.

Chapter 2

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2. Personal communications by J-2 analysts to the author, August 1990.
3. Cigar, "Iraq's Strategic Mindset," 1–2.
4. Woodward, *Commanders*, 205–56, 259. See also interview with Charles W. Freeman (167–70), who was present at the meeting.
5. Atwan, *Secret History of al-Qa'ida*, 46; Pagonis and Cruikshank, *Moving Mountains*; Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, 58–60, 88.
6. Hourani, *Arab Peoples*, 404–6.
7. Al-Marashi and Salama, *Iraq's Armed Forces*, 90–116.
8. Russell, "Iraq's Chemical Weapons Legacy," 194; "When Saddam Gassed 5,000 Kurds at Halabja," AFP, *Express Tribune*, Mar. 14, 2018.
9. Hamza, "Inside Saddam's Nuclear Program," 26–33.
10. "OPLAN 1002 Defense of the Arabian Peninsula" (ca. 2004), Global Security .org, n.d., https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oplan-1002.htm (accessed Nov. 9, 2020). Most unified command plans had standardized numerical designations, with the 1000-series allocated to Central Command.
11. US Department of the Air Force, "White Paper," 8.

12. Woodward, *Commanders*, 256–57.
13. Swain, *"Lucky War,"* 31, 37–43.
14. Coker, *Indispensable Force*, 24–25.
15. Quilter, *Marines in the Persian Gulf*, 3–6, 8.
16. Marolda and Schneller, *Shield and Sword*, 4, 61, 78–79, 121. I am indebted to Commander John T. Kuehn, USN (ret.), who served on the *Kennedy* as a member of the battle group staff, for his insights about these deployments.
17. US 103rd Cong., "Intelligence Successes and Failure," 1, 4–5, 9. Logistics staffs, which lacked existing structure, were even weaker than intelligence, being built up from scratch. Pagonis and Cruikshank, *Moving Mountains*, 85–89, 99–103.
18. Keaney and Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, 3–4.
19. Woods et al., *Iraqi Perspectives Report*, xvii–xviii, 16, 25.
20. Keaney and Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, 6, 33–37.
21. Woodward, *Commanders*, 274–80.
22. DOD, *Persian Gulf War*, 103–4. The author was present at the meeting in the fall of 1990 at which DIA and CIA agreed to regard all Iraqi units as being full table organization and equipment strength so as to avoid underestimating the enemy.
23. Woodward, *Commanders*, 287–91.
24. Swain, *"Lucky War,"* 73–89; DOD, *Persian Gulf War*, 315.
25. Sherry, *Army Command Post*, 64.
26. Swain, *"Lucky War,"* 123–31.
27. Pagonis and Cruikshank, *Moving Mountains*, 126–27.
28. Schubert and Kraus, *Whirlwind War*, 121, 70–73.
29. Woodward, *Commanders*, 337, 327.
30. DOD, *Persian Gulf War*, 320, 324, 337; Swain, *"Lucky War,"* 93–95.
31. DOD, *Persian Gulf War*, , 250–306.
32. US Department of the Air Force, "White Paper," 3–6.
33. Woodward, *Commanders*, 319–24.
34. Freeman, Interview, 176.
35. Purrington, "Tokyo's Policy Responses," 162–63, 166, 171.
36. DOD, *Persian Gulf War*, xii.
37. Woodward, *Commanders*, 342.
38. DOD, *Persian Gulf War*, 326.
39. Warden, *Air Campaign*.
40. Pietrucha, "Five-Ring Circus."
41. Keaney and Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, 5, 149–51, 215, 229–30.
42. Keaney and Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, 165–68.
43. DOD, *Persian Gulf War*, 200, 245.
44. DOD, *Persian Gulf War*, 147, 152–53; Woodward, *Commanders*, 364.
45. DOD, *Persian Gulf War*, 157–59; Keany and Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, 200–202.
46. DOD, *Persian Gulf War*, 169–70; Keany and Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, 57–60.
47. Keany and Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, 140, 151–53, 171–74; US General Accounting Office, "Operation Desert Storm," 32–36.
48. Friedman, *Desert Victory*, 186.
49. US 103rd Cong., "Intelligence Successes and Failure," 10, 19–22.

50. US 103rd Cong., "Intelligence Successes and Failure," 19–20; Gordon and Trainor, *Generals' War*, 334–37. The author was peripherally involved in the DIA decision to use CENTCOM figures in its published intelligence estimates. See also Christopher A. Lawrence, "A Story about Planning for Desert Storm (1991)," Dupuy Institute, Apr. 6, 2022, http://www.dupuyinstitute.org/blog/2022/04/06/a-story-about-planning-for-desert-storm/.
51. DOD, "Information Paper"; Schubert and Kraus, *Whirlwind War*, 239.
52. Greenwald, "Scud Alert!," 8.
53. These oil shipments did not violate UN sanctions against Iraq. During the 1980s, Jordan had lent money to Iraq, and was collecting payment in kind, not buying oil in 1991. The Jordanians believed the air attacks were deliberate. See Lamis Andoni, "Jordan's King Hussein in Balancing Act," *Christian Science Monitor*, Feb. 4, 1991; and Mark Fineman, "Allies Bomb Them, Refugees Say; War Victims: Finally, Iraq Allows the First Egyptian Refugees to Cross the Border into Jordan," *New York Times*, Jan. 31, 1991.
54. US 103rd Cong., "Intelligence Successes and Failure," 12; Keaney and Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, 87–90.
55. Schubert and Kraus, *Whirlwind War*, 248.
56. Marshall, "Fatal Error," 1247. The Patriot project office had already issued a software fix for this problem, but it was not installed until the day after the Dhahran attack.
57. Freeman, Interview, 182.
58. Friedman, *Desert Victory*, 241.
59. Keany and Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, 70–71.
60. DOD, *Persian Gulf War*, 200–202.
61. Press, "Myth of Air Power," 13–14 (incl. n25), 30–38.
62. Titus, "Battle of Khafji," 7–8.
63. Titus, "Battle of Khafji," 10.
64. Gordon and Trainor, *Generals' War*, 332–34.
65. DOD, *Persian Gulf War*, 367–74. On the Egyptian advance, see Pollack, *Armies of Sand*, 65–67.
66. Swain, *"Lucky War,"* 236–40; Gordon and Trainor, *Generals' War*, 379–87. One possible explanation for General Schwarzkopf's impatience was that he was subconsciously expecting the rapidity he had witnessed in computer-driven command post exercises before the actual offensive.
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68. DOD, *Persian Gulf War*, 213–15, 306.
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70. Edwin Chien, "Iraq Accepts Terms, U.S. Says: Speedy Prisoner Exchange Planned," *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 4, 1991, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-03-04-mn-79-story.html.
71. Gordon and Trainor, *Generals' War*, 444–48.
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73. Tom Hundley, "Egyptians Abandoned by Gulf War Allies," *Chicago Tribune*, July 7, 1991.
74. Griffo, "Rising Tide in the Gulf," 9–12; Kilcullen, *Dragons and Snakes*, 183–84.
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78. Schultz and Pfaltzgraff, *Future of Air Power*, 33–35.
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80. John A. Warden, "Employing Air Power in the Twenty-First Century," 57, and Richard L. Schultz, "Compellance and the Role of Air Power as a Political Instrument," 179–85, in Schultz and Pfaltzgraff, *Future of Air Power*; Hallion, *Storm over Iraq*, 1.
81. Keany and Cohen, *Gulf War Air Power Survey*, 250.
82. Kilcullen, *Dragons and Snakes*, 72–74.

Chapter 3

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2. Bodansky, *Chechen Jihad*, 25–31.
3. Thomas, "Caucasus and Russian Security," 50–108; Thomas, "Battle of Grozny," 87–102. See also Glenn, *Capital Preservation*, 13–97.
4. Service, *End of the Cold War*, 53, 112–13, 180, 267, 316, 367, 419.
5. Odom, *Collapse of the Soviet Military*, 251–52.
6. de Waal, *Black Garden*, 19–38, 38–57; Lebed, *My Life and My Country*, 173–82.
7. Herspring, *The Kremlin*, 49–50; Odom, *Collapse of the Soviet Military*, 253–59; Lebed, *My Life and My Country*, 215.
8. Odom, *Collapse of the Soviet Military*, 292–97.
9. Reese, *Red Commanders*, 251–52.
10. Odom, *Collapse of the Soviet Military*, 302–3.
11. Odom, *Collapse of the Soviet Military*, 359–87.
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15. Dale R. Herspring, "Russian Nuclear and Conventional Weapons: The Broken Relationship," in Blank, *Russian Nuclear Weapons*, 6.
16. Julian Cooper, "Society-Military Relations in Russia: The Economic Dimension," in Webber and Mathers, *Military and Society*, 132–33.
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18. Maloney, *Operation Kinetic*, 87.
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21. Seely, *Russo-Chechen Conflict*, 275–79.
22. Baev, "Military Reform," 119.
23. Pashin, "Russian Army Operations."
24. Baev, "Military Reform," 121–22.

25. Bodansky, *Chechen Jihad*, 335–84.
26. Derek Gatopoulos and Andrew Kravchenko, "Rival Chechen Fighters Take War to Battlefields of Ukraine," Associated Press, Aug. 27, 2022, https://news.yahoo.com/rival-chechen-fighters-war-battlefields-175700739.html.
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28. The 13 percent figure is from Asch and Warner, "Voluntary Separation Incentives," xii, 35–36.
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30. Proctor, *Lessons Unlearned*, 50–53.
31. US Department of the Air Force, Air Force Manual 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine*, 1:1–6.
32. US Department of the Navy, "... From the Sea"; US Navy/US Marine Corps, Naval Doctrine Publication 1, esp. 21–23, 31–63.
33. Sherry, *Army Command Post*, 25–26. The army had 27 percent of the 1989 defense budget.
34. Romjue, *American Army Doctrine*, esp. 35–126. See also US Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*.
35. Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, chap. 3, 6–1, 6–2.
36. See, for example, Sherry, *Army Command Post*, 37–58.
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38. Clark, *Waging Modern War*, 47–49.
39. Department of Defense, *Bottom-Up Review*, iii, 13–16.
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43. Department of Defense, *Bottom-Up Review*, 93; Coker, *Indispensable Force*, 43–45, 50–51, 101–8.
44. Sherry, *Army Command Post*, 72, 106.
45. On the use of information networks and contracting out, see, for example, Cohen, *Defense Reform Initiative Report*, 8–10; and Alberts, Garstka, and Stein, *Network Centric Warfare*, esp. 15–23.
46. Sherry, *Army Command Post*, 78, 160, 176, 162.
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53. US Nuclear Regulatory Commission, "Jefferson Proving Ground," https://www.nrc.gov/info-finder/decommissioning/complex/jefferson-proving-ground-facility.html.
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55. Tom King, "Defence (Options for Change)," Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), House of Commons, 25 July 1990, cols. 468–86.
56. Farrell, Rynning, and Terriff, *Transforming Military Power*, 131.

57. Freedman, *Politics of British Defence*, 15–38, 100.
58. Stöhs, "Into the Abyss?," 15–16.
59. "The Armed Forces: Losing Muscle," *Economist* 450, no. 9382 (Feb. 3, 2024): 46–47.
60. Bickford, "Soldiers, Citizens," 266–69.
61. Bindenagel, "Afghanistan," 99–101.
62. Young, *Germany's Defense Structures*, 11.
63. Leonhard, "National People's Army," 152–53.
64. Bickford, "Soldiers. Citizens," 261.
65. Bindenagel, "Afghanistan," 102–3.
66. Jørgensen and Breitenbauch, *Never Gonna Give You Up?*, 21, 24, 26.
67. Granier, Joseph, and Joutard, "Le service militaire et l'insertion professionnelle des jeunes suivant leur niveau d'étude," 652.
68. Jørgensen and Breitenbauch, *Never Gonna Give You Up?*, 30, 34.
69. Stöhs, "Into the Abyss?," 37n5.
70. Stöhs, "Into the Abyss?," 18, 22.
71. Matthias Gebauer and Kontantin von Hammerstein, "An Examination of the Truly Dire State of Germany's Military," *Der Spiegel International*, Jan. 17, 2023, https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/the-bad-news-bundeswehr-an-examination-of-the-truly-dire-state-of-germany-s-military-a-df92eaaf-e3f9-464d-99a3-efoc27dcc797?utm_source=Newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=FRAGO+282+%7C+Readiness%2C+Roads+and+Realism&utm_campaign=FRAGO+282.

Chapter 4

1. This interference climaxed in 1860, when the great powers jointly intervened to protect Christians in what was then Syria, including landing a French garrison in Beirut! Bass, *Freedom's Battle*, 3, 25, 155–223.
2. Jonathan Bailey, quoted in Glenn, *Capital Preservation*, 25.
3. This background explanation of the situation in Somalia is based primarily on Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 9–19.
4. Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, 8–9.
5. On the Ogaden War, see House, *Military History of the Cold War*, 42–45.
6. Poole, *Effort to Save Somalia*, 1.
7. Haulman, "Air Force in Somalia (revised)," 2.
8. Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, 29, 18.
9. Poole, *Effort to Save Somalia*, 8–10. For the background of the Weinberger Doctrine, sometimes misnamed the Powell Doctrine, see House, *Military History of the Cold War*, 282–83.
10. Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, 43–46.
11. Quoted in Freeman, Lambert, and Mims, "Restore Hope," 64.
12. Poole, *Effort to Save Somalia*, 6, quotation 22.
13. Freeman, Lambert, and Mims, "Restore Hope," 67–68.
14. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 26, 34; Carl F. Ernst, "Joint Task Force Somalia," in Glenn, *Capital Preservation*, 366–67.
15. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 30–32; Poole, *Effort to Save Somalia*, 23.
16. Poole, *Effort to Save Somalia*, 30.

17. Freeman, Lambert, and Mims, "Restore Hope," 70.
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19. Allard, *Somalia Operations*, 44–45.
20. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 45.
21. Allard, *Somalia Operations*, 36; Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, 67.
22. Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, 55–57.
23. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 64–65.
24. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 71–74.
25. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 81–83; Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, 101–2.
26. Allard, *Somalia Operations*, 36–51.
27. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 102.
28. Poole, *Effort to Save Somalia*, 38.
29. Jonathan Howe, quoted in Benton, *Soldiers for Peace*, 172.
30. Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, 116–17.
31. Poole, *Effort to Save Somalia*, 31.
32. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 107; Poole, *Effort to Save Somalia*, 47–48.
33. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 117–18.
34. UNSCR 837, June 6, 1993, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/166972?v=pdf.
35. Poole, *Effort to Save Somalia*, 42; Haulman, "Air Force in Somalia" (revised), 9–10.
36. Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, 119.
37. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 119.
38. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 140, 144–45; Allard, *Somalia Operations*, 52–53.
39. UNSCR 865, Sept. 22, 1993, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/173064?v=pdf. Despite this public commitment to democracy, on September 11 the Deputies Committee had abandoned the bottom-up approach to building local government. Poole, *Effort to Save Somalia*, 51.
40. Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, 123–24.
41. This account of the Black Hawk Down incident is based primarily on Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 142–56.
42. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 1.
43. Ernst, "Joint Task Force Somalia," in Glenn, *Capital Preservation*, 365.
44. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 179–81.
45. Ernst, "Joint Task Force Somalia," in Glenn, *Capital Preservation*, 375, 385, 409.
46. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 180–88.
47. Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 189–91.
48. Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, 131–45.
49. Hirsch and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, 145–48; Baumann, Yates, and Washington, *"My Clan against the World,"* 192–95.
50. Holbrooke, *To End a War*, 217.
51. Presidential Decision Directive 25, Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations, esp. 3 and 14.
52. Zanotti, "Imagining Democracy," 546.

53. For the historical background to Haiti's difficulties, see Saye, "Haitian State," esp. 72–77; Morrell, Neild, and Byrne, "Haiti and Nation-Building," 127–32; and Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, esp. 2–32.
54. Sprague, *Paramilitarism*, 24–26.
55. Sprague, *Paramilitarism*, 29–44.
56. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 33–35.
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60. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 56.
61. UNSCR 841, June 16, 1993, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/168120?v=pdf.
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65. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 41–42.
66. Shacochis, *Immaculate Invasion*, 53–60.
67. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 43–53.
68. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 61–63.
69. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 57–61.
70. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 56, 64–68.
71. Dobbins et al., *After the War*, 55–60.
72. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 69–71.
73. "Agreement Signed by Jimmy Carter and Emile Jonassaint, the Military-Appointed President of Haiti, in Port-au-Prince, on 18 September 1994," https://www.peaceagreements.org/viewmasterdocument/1805 (accessed June 26, 2021). See also "Showdown in Haiti: Carter; Carter's Diplomatic Mission Was a Last-Minute Gamble," *New York Times*, Sept. 19, 1994, 1.
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75. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 76–79.
76. Fisher, Stewart, and Sandler, *Operation Uphold*, 33.
77. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 96–100; Fisher, Stewart, and Sandler, *Operation Uphold*, 30.
78. Zanotti, "Imagining Democracy," 539–44.
79. Dobbins et al., *After the War*, 60.
80. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 103–4; Sprague, *Paramilitarism*, 79.
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82. Fisher, Stewart, and Sandler, *Operation Uphold*, 41–43, 63.
83. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 136–37.
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90. Fisher, Stewart, and Sandler, *Operation Uphold*, 56–57.
91. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 124.
92. Kretchik, Baumann, and Fishel, *Invasion, Intervention*, 135.
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99. On the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, see House, *Military History of the Cold War*, 195–99.
100. Norton, *Hezbollah*, 33–43.
101. Grant, "Bekaa Valley War," 58–62.
102. Schow, *Falcons against the Jihad*, 5–14.
103. Marcus, *Israel's Long War*, 46–50.
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105. Terns, "Conflict in South Lebanon," 177–79.
106. Marcus, *Israel's Long War*, 61, 86, 130–37, 143–44.
107. Johnson, *Hard Fighting*, 17–19.
108. Johnson, *Hard Fighting*, 57, 59–63.
109. Norton, *Hezbollah*, 88–90.
110. Norton, *Hezbollah*, 90–91.
111. Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 39, 49.
112. Norton, *Hezbollah*, 91–93.
113. Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 41–48.
114. Rabil, *Syria*, 117–18, 125–35, 155, 169–77.
115. Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 2–13, 102–4.
116. Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 65–73.
117. Johnson, *Hard Fighting*, xvi–xvii, 32.
118. Marcus, *Israel's Long War*, 122–32, 173–81; Johnson, *Hard Fighting*, 27–31.
119. Marcus, *Israel's Long War*, 186–87.
120. Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 101–2, 161–63, 197.
121. Johnson, *Hard Fighting*, 61.
122. Marcus, *Israel's Long War*, 208.
123. Johnson, *Hard Fighting*, 67.
124. Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 128–42, 174–75, 186.
125. Johnson, *Hard Fighting*, xviii; Biddle and Friedman, *2006 Lebanon Campaign*, 36–70.
126. Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 153.
127. Davis, "Decisive Role of Operational Time," esp. 17–25.

128. This description of the Saluki battle is based primarily on Harel and Issacharoff, *34 Days*, 219–29, and Johnson, *Hard Fighting*, 70–75.
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Chapter 5

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29. Smith, *Utility of Force*, 337–51, 279.

30. Donia, *Radovan Karadžič*, 192–96; Magas and Zanic, *War in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 360–63.
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Chapter 7

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Chapter 12

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